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HISTORICAL VIEW

OF THE

LITERATURE

OF THE

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SOUTH OF EUROPE;

BY

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VIEW

OF

THE LITERATURE

OF THE

SOUTH OF EUROPE.

CHAPTER XI

Boccaccio.—Italian Literature, at the close of the Fourteenth, and during the Fifteenth Century.

The fourteenth century forms a brilliant æra in Italian literature, highly honourable to the human intellect, and is distinguished, beyond any other period, for the creative powers of genius which it exhibited. The germ of literature also existed in other countries. The poetry of this epoch which has survived to us, possesses a charm, derived from the dawn of civilization, in its novelty, vigour, and freshness of imagination; but it belongs rather to the age which gave it birth than to any individual. The songs of the South of France, the chivalrous tales of the North of Europe, the romances of Spain, and the pastorals of

Portugal, bear a national character, which pleasingly reminds us of the spirit and manners of the time; but they do not strike us as the work of a powerful genius, nor awake in us an attachment to any individual poet. It was not thus with Italy. The culture of the mind was, at least, as far advanced there, as in France and Spain; but in the midst of their numerous contemporaries, three writers, who, each in his own sphere, gave a new impulse to their native tongue, were especially remarkable. These men afforded models which were ardently followed in other countries, and raised to themselves memorials which the most distant posterity will regard with delight. At the opening of this century, Dante gave to Europe his great poem; the first which, since the dawn of letters, could bear a comparison with the ancient epic. The lyric muse again strung her lyre at the call of Petrarch; and Boccaccio was the creator of a style of prose, harmonious, flexible, and engaging, and alike suitable to the most elevated and to the most playful subjects. The last mentioned member of this illustrious triumvirate cannot, indeed, be ranked so high as his two contemporaries, since the prose style, of which he was the author, is not of so elevated a class as the efforts of the muse, and the formation of the language of common life seems less to require the higher powers of genius. His chief work, moreover, is sullied by immorality; and

the eloquence of his expression is too frequently allied to an improper levity. Yet that energy of mind which enabled him to give birth to a style of prose at once so pure, so elegant, and so harmonious, when no model for it existed either in the Italian, or in any other language of the age, is not less deserving of admiration, than those inspirations of genius which awoke and gave rules to the higher strains of poetry.

Giovanni Boccaccio was born at Paris, in 1313, and was the natural son of a merchant of Florence, himself born at Certaldo, a castle in the Val d' Elsa, in the Florentine territory. His father had intended him for a commercial life, but before devoting him to it, indulged him with a literary education. From his earliest years, Boccaccio evinced a decided predilection for letters. He wrote verses, and manifested an extreme aversion to trade. He revolted equally at the prospect of a commercial life, and the study of the canon law, which his father was desirous of his undertaking. To oblige his father, however, he made several journeys of business; but he brought back with him, instead of a love for his employment, a more extended information, and an increased passion for study. He at length obtained permission to devote himself wholly to literature, and fixed on Naples as his place of residence, where letters then flourished under the powerful protection of Robert, the reigning monarch. He

was quickly initiated in all the sciences at that time taught. He acquired also the rudiments of the Greek tongue, which, though then spoken in Calabria, was an abstruse study with the early scholars. In 1341, he assisted at the celebrated examination of Petrarch, which preceded his coronation at Rome; and, from that time, a friendship arose between him and the poet, which terminated only with their lives. At this period, Boccaccio, distinguished no less for the elegance of his person than for the brilliancy of his wit, and devoted to pleasure, formed an attachment to a natural daughter of King Robert, named Maria, who for several years had been the wife of a Neapolitan gentleman. This lady he has celebrated in his writings, under the name of Fiammetta. In the attachment of Boccaccio, we must not look for that purity or delicacy which distinguished Petrarch in his love for Laura. This princess had been brought up in the most corrupt court of Italy; she herself partook of its spirit, and it is to her depraved taste that the exceptionable parts of the Decameron, a work undertaken by Boccaccio in compliance with her request, and for her amusement, are to be attributed. On his side, Boccaccio probably loved her as much from vanity as from real passion; for, although distinguished for her beauty, her grace, and her wit, as much as for her rank, she does not seem to have exercised any extraordinary influence on his

life; and neither the conduct nor the writings of Boccaccio afford evidence of a sincere or profound attachment. Boccaccio quitted Naples in 1342, to return to Florence. He came back again in 1344, and returned for the last time in 1350. From that year, he fixed himself in his native country, where his reputation had already assigned him a distinguished rank. His life was thenceforth occupied by his public employments in several embassies; by the duties which his increasing friendship to Petrarch imposed on him; and by the constant and indefatigable labours to which he devoted himself for the advancement of letters, the discovery of ancient manuscripts, the elucidation of subjects of antiquity, the introduction of the Greek language into Italy, and the composition of his numerous works. After taking the ecclesiastical habit, in 1361, he died at Certaldo, in the mansion of his ancestors, on the twenty-first of December, 1375, at the age of sixty-two.

The Decameron, the work to which Boccaccio is at the present day indebted for his highest celebrity, is a collection of one hundred Novels or Tales. He has ingeniously united them, under the supposition of a party formed in the dreadful pestilence of 1348, composed of a number of cavaliers, and young, intelligent, and accomplished women, retired to a delightful part of the country, to escape the contagion. It was there agreed that each person, during the space of ten days, should

narrate, daily, a fresh story. The company consisted of ten persons, and thus the number of stories amounted to one hundred. The description of the enchanting country in the neighbourhood of Florence, where these gay recluses had established themselves; the record of their walks, their numerous *fêtes*, and their repasts, afforded Boccaccio an opportunity of displaying all the treasures of his powerful and easy pen. These stories, which are varied with infinite art, as well in subject as in style, from the most pathetic and tender to the most sportive, and, unfortunately, the most licentious, exhibit a wonderful power of narration; and his description of the plague in Florence, which serves as an introduction to them, may be ranked with the most celebrated historical descriptions which have descended to us. The perfect truth of colouring; the exquisite choice of circumstances, calculated to produce the deepest impression, and which place before our eyes the most repulsive scenes, without exciting disgust; and the emotion of the writer, which insensibly pervades every part, give to this picture that true eloquence of history which, in Thucydides, animates the relation of the plague in Athens. Boccaccio had, doubtless, this model before his eyes; but the events, to which he was a witness, had vividly impressed his mind, and it was the faithful delineation of what he had seen,

rather than the classical imitation, which, served to develope his talent.

One cannot but pause in astonishment, at the choice of so gloomy an introduction to effusions of so gay a nature. We are amazed at such an intoxicated enjoyment of life, under the threatened approach of death; at such irrepressible desire in the bosom of man to divert the mind from sorrow; and at the torrent of mirth which inundates the heart, in the midst of horrors which should seem to wither it up. As long as we feel delight in nourishing feelings that are in unison with a melancholy temperament, we have not yet felt the overwhelming weight of real sorrow. When experience has, at length, taught us the substantial griefs of life, we then first learn the necessity of resisting them; and, calling the imagination to our aid, to turn aside the shafts of calamity, we struggle with our sorrow, and treat it as an invalid, from whom we withdraw every object which may remind him of the cause of his malady. With regard to the stories themselves, it would be difficult to convey an idea of them by extracts, and impossible to preserve, in a translation, the merits of their style. The praise of Boccaccio consists in the perfect purity of his language, in his elegance, his grace, and, above all, in that *naïveté*, which is the chief merit of narration, and the peculiar charm of the Italian tongue.

Unfortunately, Boccaccio did not prescribe to himself the same purity in his images as in his phraseology. The character of his work is light and sportive. He has inserted in it a great number of tales of gallantry; he has exhausted his powers of ridicule on the duped husband, on the depraved and depraving monks, and on subjects, in morals and religious worship, which he himself regarded as sacred; and his reputation is thus little in harmony with the real tenor of his conduct. The Decameron was published towards the middle of the fourteenth century (in 1352 or 1353), when Boccaccio was at least thirty-nine years of age; and from the first discovery of printing, was freely circulated in Italy, until the Council of Trent proscribed it, in the middle of the sixteenth century. At the solicitation of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and after two remarkable negotiations between this Prince and Popes Pius V. and Sixtus V., the Decameron was again published, in 1573 and 1582, purified and corrected.

Many of the tales of Boccaccio appear to be borrowed from popular recitation, or from real occurrences. We trace the originals of several, in the ancient French *fabliaux;* of some, in the Italian collection of the *Centi Novelli;* and of others, again, in an Indian romance, which passed through all the languages of the East, and of which a Latin translation appeared as early as the twelfth

century, under the name of *Dolopathos*, or the King and the Seven Wise Men. Invention, in this class of writing, is not less rare than in every other; and the same tales, probably, which Boccaccio had collected in the gay courts of princes, or in the squares of the cities of Italy, have been repeated to us anew in all the various languages of Europe. They have been versified by the early poets of France and England, and have afforded reputation to three or four imitators of Boccaccio. But, if Boccaccio cannot boast of being the inventor of these tales, he may still claim the creation of this class of letters. Before his time, tales were only subjects of social mirth. He was the first to transport them into the world of letters; and, by the elegance of his diction, the just harmony of all the parts of his subject, and the charm of his narration, he superadded the more refined gratifications of language and of art, to the simpler delight afforded by the old narrators.

A romance of Boccaccio, called the *Fiammetta*, is, after the Tales, the most celebrated of his works. Boccaccio may be considered as the inventor of the love romances. This species of composition was wholly unknown to antiquity. The Byzantine Greeks, indeed, possessed some romances, which have since reached us; but there is no reason to believe that Boccaccio had ever seen them, nor, if he had been acquainted

with them, is it probable that he would have imitated works of imagination, invented so long after the decline of literature. The chivalric romances of the French, of which we have spoken, had, it is true, a connexion with that class of which Boccaccio may be considered the creator. But instead of having recourse to marvellous incidents, which might engage the imagination, he has drawn his resources from the human heart and passions. Fiammetta is a noble lady of Naples, who relates her passion and her sufferings. She speaks in her own person, and the author himself never appears. The incidents are little varied, and they fall off, instead of increasing in interest, towards the conclusion. But the passion is expressed with a fervour and a voluptuousness, beyond that of any other Italian writer. We feel that Fiammetta is consumed by the flame which she divulges; and although not in any way allied to Phædra, that character recurs to our recollection. In the one, as well as in the other,

" C'est Vénus tout entière à sa proie attachée."

Boccaccio was accustomed to represent, under the name of Fiammetta, the Princess Maria, the object of his love. The scene, which is laid at Naples, the rank of the lady, and many other circumstances, would lead us to believe, that, in this romance, Boccaccio has in some measure related his own adventures. But, in this case, it

is remarkable, that he should assign the chief part to the lady; that he should paint the passionate love of Fiammetta, and the infidelity of Panfilo, in a work dedicated to his mistress; and that he should reveal to the public, adventures on which his honour and his life might depend.

The conversations in the Fiammetta may, perhaps, be considered tedious; and we are fatigued by the scholastic mode of reasoning of the interlocutors, who are never disposed to relinquish an argument. The style is in reality dull; but this was a necessary consequence of the education and pedantry in repute at the time of its composition. Another, and a more singular defect in this romance, arises from the incongruous mixture of the ancient mythology with the Christian religion. Fiammetta, who had seen Panfilo for the first time at mass, in a Catholic church, is determined, by Venus appearing to her, to listen to his passion; and, during the whole recital, the manners and belief of the ancients and moderns are continually intermixed. We remark this incongruity in the romances and *fabliaux* of the middle ages, on all occasions when the *Trouvères* have attempted the manners of antiquity. As these ignorant authors could not form an idea of any other mode of manners than that of their own age, they have given an air of Christianity to all which they have borrowed from ancient mythology. But the scho-

lars who restored the study of the classics, with Boccaccio at their head, treated the subject differently. It was to the gods of antiquity that they attributed life, power, and energy. Accustomed to confine their admiration to the ancient classics, they always recurred to the object of their studies, and to the images and machinery to which they were habituated, even in works which were founded on the warmest feelings of the heart.

Boccaccio was the author, also, of another romance, longer than the Fiammetta, and more generally known, intitled *Filocopo*. In this, are narrated the adventures of Florio and Biancafiore, the heroes of an ancient chivalric romance, which Boccaccio has merely remodelled. The mixture of the ancient mythology with Christianity seems, there, to be effected in a more systematic manner than in the Fiammetta. Boccaccio speaks always of the religion of the moderns in the terms of the ancients. In alluding to the war between Manfred of Sicily and Charles of Anjou, he represents the Pope as high priest of Juno, and imagines him to be instigated by that goddess, who thus revenges herself on the last descendants of the emperors, for the ancient wrong which Dido suffered. He afterwards speaks of the incarnation of the son of Jupiter, and of his descending to the earth to reform and redeem it. He even addresses a prayer to Jupiter, and, in short, seems determined to confound the

two religions, and to prove that they are, in fact, the same worship, under different names. It may be doubted, whether fastidiousness might lead Boccaccio to believe that he ought not to employ, in a work of taste, names which were unknown to the writers of the Augustan age; or whether, on the contrary, a religious scruple, still more eccentric, forbade him to mingle the name of the Deity, with the tales of his own invention. In either case, this system of poetical religion is not less extraordinary than profane. There are, in the Filocopo, many more adventures, and a greater variety of incident, but less passion than in the Fiammetta. The perusal is sometimes rendered fatiguing, by the pains which Boccaccio has taken to make the style harmonious, and to round his periods; and this measured prose betrays a laboured and sometimes an affected style.

Boccaccio has also left two heroic poems, *La Theseide* and *Filostrato*, neither of which has obtained any great reputation, and both are, at the present day, nearly forgotten. They deserve, however, to be mentioned, as being the first attempts at the ancient epic, since the fall of the Roman empire. Petrarch, it is true, had, in his Latin poem of *Africa*, attempted to rival Virgil; but he did little more than clothe an historical narration in frigid hexameters, nor has he invested his subject with any other poetic charm than that which arises from the regularity of the verse.

Boccaccio, on the contrary, was sensible that a powerful imagination and feeling were essential to the epic. But he overreached his mark, and composed romances rather than poems; although, even here, he opened to his successors the route which they were to follow.

These two poems of Boccaccio, in another point of view, form an æra in the history of epic poetry. They are both composed in *ottava rima*, or in that kind of stanza of eight lines, which has since been employed by all the epic poets of Italy, Spain, and Portugal. Of this, Boccaccio was the inventor. He found that the *terza rima*, employed by Dante, imposed too great a constraint on the poet, and, by its close texture, held the attention of the reader too long suspended. All the other forms of versification were appropriated to the lyric muse; and any verses which were not submitted to a regular structure, did not seem sufficiently poetical to the refined ears of the Italians. The stanza which Boccaccio invented, is composed of six lines, which rhyme interchangeably with each other, and are followed by a couplet. There exist instances of the octave verse before his time, but under a different form.*

* We find, in the earlier poetry of the Sicilians, stanzas of eight verses, with only two rhymes, alternately employed. As early as the thirteenth century, the Castilian writers made use of

The Latin compositions of Boccaccio are voluminous, and materially contributed, at the time they were written, to the advancement of

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the octave stanza, with three rhymes; and a remarkable work of Alfonso the Tenth, King of Castile, to which we shall have occasion again to refer, is written in this metre. These stanzas of eight lines are composed of two distinct stanzas of four lines each, and the distribution of the rhymes may be thus denoted: 1, 2, 2, 1; 1, 3, 3, 1. The stanza invented by Boccaccio, and which was adopted even in Castile, runs thus: 1, 2; 1, 2; 1, 2; 3, 3. As a specimen of this sort of verse, and of the style of Boccaccio, the commencement of *La Theseide* is subjoined.

O Sorelle Castalie, che nel monte
Elacona contente dimorate,
D'intorno al saggio Gorgoneo fonte,
Sotto esso l'ombra delle frondi amate
Da Febo, dalle quali ancor la fronte
Spero d' ornarmi, sol che 'l concediate,
Le sante orecchie a miei preghi porgete,
E quelli udite come voi dovete.

E' m' e venuta voglia, con pietosa
Rima, di scrivere una storia antica,
Tanto negli anni riposta e nascosa
Che latin autor non par che ne dica,
Per quel ch'io senta, al libbro alcuna cosa.
Dunque si fate, che la mia fatica
Sia gratiosa a chi ne fia lettore,
O in altra maniera ascoltatore.

Siate presenti, o Marte rubicondo!
Nelle tue armi rigido e feroce,
E tu, madre d' amor, col tuo giocondo
E lieto aspetto, e 'l tuo figliol veloce,

letters. The most celebrated of these works, are two Treatises; the one on the Genealogy of the Gods, and the other on mountains, forests, and

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Co dardi sol possente à tutto 'l mondo;
E sostenete la mano e la voce
Di me, ch' entendo e vostri affetti dire,
Con poco bene e pien d'assai martire.

And you, sweet sisters! who delight to dwell
Amid the quiet haunts of Castaly,
Playing beside the brink of that famed well,
And by the fount where springs the sacred tree
Belov'd by you, and him, the god, whose shell
Resounds its praise; whose honoured leaves shall be,
So let me dream! a poet's meed: O hear
His ardent prayer, if prayers to you be dear.

For Love's sake, would I tell the piteous pain,
The sad turns of a wild and ancient story,
Long hidden 'neath the veil of time, in vain
Sought for in Roman lore, or records hoary
Of far-off years. O help my feeble strain,
That so it breathe some spark of love's own glory,
And crown my ardent toils with pleasant rest,
And solace to each listener's troubled breast.

Nor let the martial god be distant far,
In his stern panoply of proof divine!
Thou, Venus! beaming like thy fav'rite star,
With joyous looks, and eyes that warmly shine,
And thou, her son, victor in amorous war!
Strengthen my hand in this my high design,
And swell the voice that pours young passion's sighs,
And bitterest tears, with too few extacies!

rivers. In the first, he gave an exposition of the ancient mythology; and in the second, rectified many errors in geography. These two works have fallen into neglect, since the discovery of manuscripts then unknown, and in consequence of the facilities which the art of printing, by opening new sources, has afforded to the study of antiquity. In the age in which they were composed, they were, however, equally remarkable for their extensive information and for the clearness of their arrangement; but the style is by no means so pure and elegant as that of Petrarch.

But, while the claim to celebrity, in these great men, is restricted to the Italian poetry of Petrarch and to the novels of Boccaccio, our gratitude to them is founded on stronger grounds. They felt more sensibly than any other men, that enthusiasm for the beauties of antiquity, without which we in vain strive to appreciate its treasures; and they each devoted a long and laborious life to the discovery and the study of ancient manuscripts. The most valued works of the ancients

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La Theseide was imitated by Chaucer, the father of English poetry. When the lapse of time had rendered his work almost unintelligible to the generality of readers, Dryden reproduced it in his poem of *Palamon and Arcite*, which was well received. It must be confessed, however, that the exaggerated passions, improbable incidents, and long tiresome descriptions of this fable, render the perusal of the original, and of the imitations, equally difficult.

were at that time buried among the archives of convents, scattered at great distances, incorrect and incomplete, without tables of contents or marginal notes. Nor did those resources then exist, which printing supplies, for the perusal of works with which we are not familiar; and the facilities which are afforded by previous study, or the collation of the originals with each other, were equally wanting. It must have required a powerful intellect to discover, in a manuscript of Cicero, for example, without title or commencement, the full meaning of the author, the period at which he wrote, and other circumstances, which are connected with his subject; to correct the numerous errors of the copyists; to supply the chasms, which, frequently occurring at the beginning and the end, left neither title nor divisions nor conclusions, nor any thing that might serve as a clue for the perusal: in short, to determine how one manuscript, discovered at Heidelberg, should perfect another, discovered at Naples. It was, in fact, by long and painful journies, that the scholars of those days accomplished themselves for this task. The copying a manuscript, with the necessary degree of accuracy, was a work of great labour and expense. A collection of three or four hundred volumes was, at that time, considered an extensive library; and a scholar was frequently compelled to seek, at a great distance, the com-

pletion of a work, commenced under his own roof.

Petrarch and Boccaccio, in their frequent travels, obtained copies of such classics as they found in their route. Among other objects, Petrarch proposed to himself to collect all the works of Cicero; in which he succeeded after a lapse of many years. Boccaccio, with a true love of letters, introduced the study of the Greek to the Italians, not only with the view of securing the interests of commerce or of science, but of enriching their minds, and extending their researches to the other half of the ancient world of letters, which had, till then, remained hidden from his contemporaries. He founded, in Florence, a chair for the teaching of the Greek language; and he himself invited thither, and installed as professor, Leontius Pilatus, one of the most learned Greeks of Constantinople. He received him into his own house, although he was a man of a morose and disagreeable temper; placed him at his table, as long as this professor could be induced to remain at Florence; inscribed himself among the first of his scholars, and procured at his own expense, from Greece, the manuscripts, which were thus distributed in Florence, and which served as subjects for the lectures of Leontius Pilatus. For the instruction of those days consisted in the public delivery of lectures with commentaries; and a book, of which

there, perhaps, existed only a single copy, sufficed for some thousand scholars.

There is an infinite space between the three great men whose works we have just enumerated, and even the most esteemed of their contemporaries; and, though these latter have preserved, until the present day, a considerable reputation, yet we shall only pause to notice their existence, and the epoch to which they belong. Perhaps the most remarkable are the three Florentine historians of the name of Villani. Giovanni, the eldest, who died in the first plague, in 1348; Matteo, his brother, who died in the second plague, in 1361; and Filippo, the son of Matteo, who continued the work of his father to the year 1364, and who wrote a history of the literature of Florence, the first attempt of this kind, in modern times. But it is in another work that I have rendered homage to these three celebrated men, who were, for more than a century, my faithful guides in the history of Italy, and who, by their candour, patriotism, and ancient frankness, by their attachment to the cause of virtue and of freedom, and to all that is ennobling in man, have inspired me with so much personal affection, that in taking leave of them to prosecute, without their further aid, my dangerous voyage, I felt as if bidding adieu to my own friends. Two poets of this age, shared with Petrarch the honours of a poetic coronation: Zanobi di Strada, whom the

Emperor Charles IV. crowned at Pisa, in 1355, with great pomp, but whose verses have not reached us; and Coluccio Salutati, secretary of the Florentine republic, one of the purest Latinists, and most eloquent statesmen whom Italy in that age produced. The latter, indeed, did not live to enjoy the honour which had been accorded him by the Emperor, at the request of the Florentines. Coluccio died in 1406, at the age of seventy-six, before the day appointed for his coronation, and the symbol of glory was deposited on his tomb; as, at a subsequent period, a far more illustrious crown was placed on the tomb of Tasso.

Of the prose writers of Tuscany, Franco Sacchetti, born at Florence about the year 1335, and who died before the end of the century, after filling some of the first offices in the republic, approaches the nearest to Boccaccio. He imitated Boccaccio in his novels, and Petrarch in his lyric poems; but the latter were never printed, while of his tales there have been several editions. Whatever praise be due to the purity and eloquence of his style, we find his pages more valuable, as a history of the manners of the age, than attractive for their powers of amusement, even when the author thinks himself most successful. His two hundred and fifty-eight tales consist, almost entirely, of the incidents of his own time, and of his own neighbourhood; domestic anecdotes, which in

general contain little humour; tricks, exhibiting little skill, and jests of little point; and we are often surprised to find a professed jester vanquished by the smart reply of a child or a clown, which scarcely deserves our attention. After reading these tales, we cannot help concluding that the art of conversation had not made, in the fourteenth century, an equal progress with the other arts; and that the great men, to whom we owe so many excellent works, were not so entertaining in the social intercourse of life, as many persons greatly their inferiors in merit.

Two poets of this time, of some celebrity, chose Dante for their model, and composed after him, in *terza rima*, long allegories, partly descriptive, partly scientific. Fazio de' Uberti in his *Dettamondo*, undertook the description of the universe, of which the different parts, personified in turns, relate their history. Federigo Frezzi, Bishop of Foligno, who died in 1416, at the council of Constance, has, in his *Quadriregio*, described the four empires of love, satan, virtue, and vice. In both of these poets we meet, occasionally, with lines not unworthy of Dante; but they formed a very false estimate of the works of genius, when they regarded the *Divina Commedia* not as an individual poem, but as a species of poetry which any one might attempt.

The passionate study of the ancients, of which Petrarch and Boccaccio had given an example,

suspended, in an extraordinary manner, the progress of Italian literature, and retarded the perfection of that tongue. Italy, after having produced her three leading classics, sunk, for a century, into inaction. In this period, indeed, erudition made wonderful progress; and knowledge became much more general, but sterile in its effects. The mind had preserved all its activity, and literary fame all its splendour; but the unintermitted study of the ancients had precluded all originality in the authors. Instead of perfecting a new language, and enriching it with works in unison with modern manners and ideas, they confined themselves to a servile copy of the ancients. A too scrupulous imitation thus destroyed the spirit of invention; and the most eminent scholars may be said to have produced, in their eloquent writings, little more than college themes. In proportion as a man was qualified by his rank, or by his talents, to acquire a name in literature, he blushed to cultivate his mother tongue. He almost, indeed, forced himself to forget it, to avoid the danger of corrupting his Latin style: and the common people thus remained the only depositories of a language, which had exhibited so brilliant a dawn, and which had now again almost relapsed into barbarism.

The fifteenth century, so barren in Italian literature, was, nevertheless, a highly literary period. In no other age, perhaps, was the love of study

so universal. Letters were powerfully supported by princes and by their subjects. All, who attached themselves to literature, were assured of fame; and the monuments of the ancient tongues, multiplied by the recently discovered press, exercised a great and lasting influence on the human mind. The sovereigns of Europe, at this brilliant period, rested their glory on the protection afforded to letters, on the classical education they had themselves received, and on their intimate knowledge of the Greek and Latin tongues. The popes, who, in the preceding times, had turned the whole weight of superstition against study, became, in the fifteenth century, the most zealous friends and protectors, and the most munificent patrons of men of letters. Two of them were themselves scholars of the first distinction. Thomas di Sarzana, who was afterwards Nicholas V., (1447 to 1455), and Æneas Sylvius, who assumed the name of Pius II., (1458 to 1464), after having rendered themselves celebrated, in the world of letters, for their extraordinary endowments, were, in consequence of their literary merit, raised to the chair of St. Peter. The dukes of Milan, the same men whom history represents to us as the disturbers and tyrants of Lombardy, Filippo Maria, the last of the Visconti, and Francesco Sforza, the founder of a military monarchy, surrounded themselves, in their capital, with the most illustrious men in science and in letters, and accorded to them the

most generous remunerations, and employs of the first confidence. The discovery of an ancient manuscript was to them, as well as to their subjects, a cause of rejoicing; and they interested themselves in questions of antiquity, and in philological disputes, as well as in affairs of state.

Two sovereign princes of less powerful families, the Marquis Gonzaga, of Mantua, and the Marquis D'Este, of Ferrara, endeavoured to supply what was wanting to them in power, by their active zeal and by the constant protection which they afforded to literature. They sought for and collected together men of letters from every part of Italy, and seemed to rival each other in lavishing upon them the richest gifts and the most flattering distinctions. To them, they entrusted exclusively the education of their children; and we should probably, in the present day, search in vain, in our most learned academies, for men who wrote Greek verse with so much elegance and purity as many of the princes of Mantua and Ferrara. At Florence, a wealthy merchant, Cosmo de' Medici, had acquired a degree of power which shook the constitution of the state; and his descendants were destined to substitute, in that city, the will of an individual for that of the people. In the midst of his vast projects of ambition, master of the monied credit of Europe, and almost the equal of the kings with whom he negotiated, Cosmo accorded, in his house, an asylum to all

the men of learning and artists of the age, converted his gardens into an academy, and produced a revolution in philosophy, by substituting the authority of Plato for that of Aristotle. His banks, which were extended over all Europe, and to the Mahomedan states, were devoted to literature as well as to commerce. His agents, at the same time, collected manuscripts and sold spices; and the vessels, which arrived on his account from Constantinople, Alexandria, and Smyrna, in the several ports of Italy, were often laden with rich collections of Greek, Syrian, and Chaldean manuscripts. At the same time, Cosmo opened public libraries at Venice and at Florence. In the south of Italy, Alfonso V., a monarch of the race of Aragon, contended with the sovereigns of the northern states, of Italian descent, in his love of science. His secretaries, friends, and counsellors, consisted of men, whose names will always remain illustrious in the republic of letters; and his reign is intimately connected with the literary history of Italy. The universities, which, two centuries before, had flourished so highly, were, it is true, paralyzed by persisting in their ancient methods and errors, and in a scholastic philosophy, which dazzled the mind, but perverted the judgment. But all men, who had then acquired a name in literature, were accustomed to open a school, which was often for them the path to fame, fortune, and office. The sovereigns of that age often chose for their ambassadors, or chancellors,

the same individuals who educated youth, or illustrated the ancients; and the public functions of these learned men interfered, only for a short space of time, with the equally noble objects of instruction. The passion for obtaining books for the purpose of forming libraries, and the prodigious price attached to a fine copy of a manuscript, awoke a spirit of invention to multiply them. The art of printing was discovered at a moment, of all others, when it was most wanted; and to that necessity its invention may, in fact, be attributed. At any other epoch, even in the days of the greatest prosperity of Greece and of Rome, so great and urgent a necessity for multiplying the copies of books was never experienced. At no time, had the world possessed so considerable a number of manuscripts, which it was desirable to save from the destruction with which they seemed menaced. In no other time, could the invention of printing have been rewarded with more munificence, and been more rapidly extended. John Guttemberg, of Mentz, who was the first to employ moveable characters, from 1450 to 1455, wished to hide the secret of his discovery, in order to insure to himself a greater profit. But, in 1465, it was introduced into Italy, and in 1469 into Paris; and, in a short time, those precious works, which were only attainable by infinite labour and expense, were multiplied by thousands, and placed within the reach of the public.

The men who flourished at this period, and to

whom we owe the revival of Greek and Latin literature, the preservation and correction of all the monuments of antiquity, the knowledge of its laws, manners, and customs, of its religion and its language, do not properly belong to Italian literature; and we shall not make a point of describing their writings, their persons, or their lives, which were continually agitated by disputes. It will be sufficient to impress a few names on the memory of the reader, in gratitude for the eminent services which they have rendered to Europe, and in recollection of a species of glory which has passed away.

John of Ravenna, who, in his youth, had been a pupil of Petrarch, already then in years, and who had received many benefits at his hands, insufficient, however, to triumph over his fickleness of temper; and Emanuel Chrysoloras, a learned Greek, who came as ambassador into Italy, to implore succour against the Turks, and who was eventually detained in that country by the zeal with which his lectures were attended, were the two teachers who, at the close of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth century, communicated to Italy a passion for the study of Greek letters, and who almost alone gave rise to that constellation of learned men which illuminated the fifteenth century. Among these may be mentioned Guarino Veronese (1370-1460), ancestor of the author of the Pastor Fido, and

the progenitor of a race wholly devoted to letters. He commenced his study of Greek at Constantinople, and brought from thence, on his return, two cases of Greek manuscripts, the fruit of his indefatigable researches. One of these was lost at sea, on the shipwreck of the vessel; and the chagrin at losing such a literary treasure, acquired by so much labour, had the effect of turning the hair of Guarino grey, in one night. He was tutor to Lionel, Marquis of Este, the most beloved and the most liberal of the sovereigns of Ferrara. He was also interpreter for the Greeks, at the Councils of Ferrara and Florence: but these distinguished occupations did not divert him from his task of instruction, and he continued his lectures, at Ferrara, to the age of ninety. His principal works consist of translations from the Greek, and commentaries on the writings of the ancients.

Giovanni Aurispa, a Sicilian, born in 1369, and who died in 1460, followed the same career as Guarino, through the course of an equally long life, and with the same success. Like him, he commenced his studies in Greece, and brought back with him to Venice two hundred and thirty manuscripts, containing the works of many distinguished writers of antiquity, which would have been otherwise lost. For a long time, he gave lectures in Florence, Ferrara, and Rome, where he was apostolic secretary, and, again, at Fer-

rara, where he died. There remain of him, some translations in Greek and Latin, some letters, and some Italian poetry; but it was to his instructions, more particularly, and to his zeal for study, that he owed the great influence which he obtained over his age, and the celebrity deservedly attached to his name.

Ambrogio Traversari (1386-1439), a monk, who afterwards became the head of the order of the Camaldoli, was one of the most illustrious pupils of Emanuel Chrysoloras, a friend of Cosmo de' Medici, and one of the founders of the school of belles lettres and philosophy in Florence. He was connected with all the distinguished men of his age, and we derive much information respecting them from his letters. He travelled from convent to convent, and took a leading share in the political events of the age, for the interests of the order of which he was the chief. But the cause of letters gained both by his journeys and by his correspondence; whilst he laboured to preserve or establish the peace of the church, and of society in general, by his conciliatory spirit. The mildness and benignity of his character were particularly valuable, at a time when the generality of scholars put no restraint on their violent tempers, and abandoned themselves to vindictive and outrageous quarrels.

The celebrated Lionardo Bruno d'Arezzo, better known under the name of Lionardo Areti-

no (1369-1444), was also a scholar of Emanuel Chrysoloras. He was apostolic secretary to four popes, and ultimately chancellor of the Florentine republic; and was not only one of the most learned, but also one of the most amiable, men of the fifteenth century, equally dignified and respectable in morals and in manners. He has left, besides a number of translations in Greek and Latin, some letters and Latin poems, and a History of Florence to the year 1404, written with correct judgment, and in an elegant and pure style, but with too evident an imitation of Livy. In consequence of this unreasonable fondness for relating the events of modern times in the style of antiquity, the historians of the fifteenth century deprived their works of all nature and originality.

Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459) was the friend of Lionardo, and continued his history. He also was a pupil of John of Ravenna, and of Emanuel Chrysoloras. From the year 1402, and during more than fifty years, he was writer of the apostolic letters; an employ which brought him little fortune, but which did not require his residence in Rome. Poggio was thus enabled to travel frequently, not only in Italy, but in Germany, in France, and in England. In his journeys, he discovered a great number of manuscripts, in danger of perishing in the hands of the monks, who were insensible to their value, and

who had banished them to the damp and obscure recesses of their convents. In this manner, he redeemed for posterity the works of Quintilian, Valerius Flaccus, Vitruvius, and others. He was tenderly attached to Cosmo de' Medici; and, when that illustrious citizen was recalled to Florence, he fixed his own residence there, in the year 1435. Florence, indeed, was his native place, but, until that period, he had always lived absent from it. He was appointed, in 1453, chancellor of the republic. Shortly afterwards, he was elected into the number of the *Priori delle arti*, or presidents of the trading companies; and he died, loaded with honours, in his native city, on the thirtieth of October, 1459. A monument was erected to his memory in the church of Santa Croce, near those of other great men, who form the boast of Florence.

Poggio was one of the most voluminous writers of his age, and united a profound genius, philosophy, fervour of imagination, and eloquence, to the most extensive attainments. Next to his History of Florence, which extends from 1350 to 1455, and which is, perhaps, his best work, may be ranked many of his philosophical dialogues and letters, in which the most noble and elevated sentiments prevail. His memory, indeed, derives less honour from his too celebrated Book of *Facetiæ*, which he published in his seventieth year; and in which, with a sarcastic gaiety, he outrages, without restraint, all good manners and

decorum. Nor are the numerous invectives, which, in his literary quarrels, he addressed to Francesco Filelfo, to Lorenzo Valla, to George of Trebizond, and to many others, less exceptionable. In an age when literature was confined to scholastic erudition, taste exercised on it little influence. Society could not repress the malignant passions, nor could respect for the other sex inspire a sense of propriety. We are astonished and disgusted at the odious accusations, with which these scholastic champions attack each other; reproaching their opponents with theft and fraud, poisonings and perjury, in the most opprobrious language. In order to justify an insolent and gross expression, they did not consider whether it were consistent with a due observance of decorum, but merely whether it were authorized by its pure Latinity; and, in these calumnious aspersions, they were much less solicitous about the truth or probability of their charges, than about the classical propriety of their vituperative epithets.

The man, whose life was most agitated by these furious literary quarrels, was Francesco Filelfo (1398—1481), the rival in reputation, and the declared enemy, of Poggio Bracciolini. Born at Tolentino, in 1398, he early distinguished himself by his erudition, and, at the age of eighteen, was appointed professor of eloquence at Padua. He relinquished that situation to go to Constantinople, to perfect himself in the

Greek language. He repaired thither, in 1420, with a diplomatic mission from the Venetians, and was afterwards employed on others, to Amurath II., and the Emperor Sigismund. Having married a daughter of John Chrysoloras, who was allied to the Imperial family of the Palæologi, this noble alliance intoxicated the mind of a man already too vain of his knowledge, and who considered himself to be the first genius, not only of his own, but of every age. On his return to Italy, his ostentatious disposition exposed him to numerous distresses, notwithstanding the liberality with which, in many cities, he was rewarded for his instructions. At the same time, the violence and asperity of his character procured him many bitter enemies. Not content with literary altercations, he interfered also in political disputes, although, in these, he was not actuated by any noble feelings. He pretended that Cosmo de' Medici had twice intended his assassination, and he, in his turn, attempted the life of Cosmo. He published his invectives in all the cities of Italy, loading, with the heaviest accusations, the enemies whom he had drawn on himself. After the death of his first wife, he married a second, and subsequently a third at Milan, where he resided a considerable time, at the court of the Sforza family. He died on the thirty-first of July, 1481, on his return to Florence, to which place he was recalled by Lorenzo de' Medici. In the midst of these con-

tinual disquiets, Filelfo, however, laboured with indefatigable activity for the advancement of literature. He left behind him a prodigious number of translations, dissertations, and philosophical writings and letters; but he contributed still more to the progress of study by his lectures, and by the treasures of his knowledge, which he displayed before four or five hundred scholars at a time, to whom he gave instruction on various subjects, four or five times repeated in the course of one day.

Lorenzo Valla is the last of these celebrated philologists whom we shall here notice. Born at Rome, at the close of the fourteenth century, he there completed his early studies. He was afterwards professor of eloquence at Pavia, until about the year 1431, when he attached himself to Alfonso V. He opened, at Naples, a school of Greek and Roman eloquence; but, not less irascible than Filelfo and Poggio, he engaged with them and others in violent disputes, of which the written invectives left us by these scholars form a lamentable proof. He composed many works, on history, criticism, dialectics, and moral philosophy. His two most celebrated productions are, a History of Ferdinand, King of Aragon, father of Alfonso, and the *Elegantiæ Linguæ Latinæ*. He died at Naples, in 1457.

The attention of the literary men of the fifteenth century was wholly engrossed by the

study of the dead languages, and of manners, customs, and religious systems, equally extinct. The charm of reality was, of course, wanting to works which were the result of so much research and labour. All these men whom we have noticed, and to whom we owe the discovery and preservation of so many valuable works, present to our observation, boundless erudition, a just spirit of criticism, and nice sensibility to the beauties and defects of the great authors of antiquity. But we look in vain for that true eloquence, which is more the fruit of an intercourse with the world, than of a knowledge of books; and these philologists professed too blind a veneration for every thing belonging to antiquity, to point out what was worthy of admiration, or to select what was deserving of imitation. They were still more unsuccessful in poetry, in which their attempts, all in Latin, are few in number; and their verses are harsh and heavy, without originality or vigour. It was not until the period when Italian poetry began to be again cultivated, that Latin verse acquired any of the characteristics of genuine inspiration.

The first man to whom may, perhaps, be attributed the restoration of Italian poetry, was, at the same time, one of the greatest men of his own and succeeding ages. This was Lorenzo de' Medici, chief of the Florentine republic, and arbiter of the whole political state of Italy (1448-1492). Lorenzo

the Magnificent had written his first poems, before he was twenty years of age. A whole century had elapsed since Petrarch and Boccaccio, renouncing subjects of love, had ceased to cultivate Italian verse; and, during this long interval, no poet worthy of commemoration had appeared. Lorenzo attempted to restore the poetry of his country, to the state in which Petrarch had left it; but this man, so superior by the greatness of his character, and by the universality of his genius, did not possess the talent of versification in the same degree as Petrarch. In his love verses, his sonnets, and *canzoni*, we find less sweetness and harmony. Their poetical colouring is less striking; and it is remarkable, that they display a ruder expression, more nearly allied to the infancy of the language. On the other hand, his ideas are more natural, and are often accompanied by a great charm of imagination. We are presented with a succession of the most delightful rural pictures, and are surprised to find the statesman so conversant with country life. His works consist of one hundred and forty sonnets, and about twenty *canzoni*, almost all composed in honour of Lucretia de' Donati. He has not, however, named her; and he seems to have chosen her only as the object of a poetical passion, and as the subject of his verse. He has celebrated her with a purity not unworthy of Petrarch, and with a delicacy which was not always observed in his other attachments. But

Lorenzo did not confine himself to lyric poetry. He attempted all kinds, and manifested in all, the versatility of his talents and the exuberance of his imagination. His poem of *Ambra*, intended to celebrate the delicious gardens, which he had planted in an island of the Ombrone, and which were destroyed by an inundation of that river, is written in beautiful octave verse. In his *Nencia da Barberino*, composed in the rustic dialect of Tuscany, he celebrates, in stanzas full of natural simplicity, gaiety, and grace, the charms of a peasant girl. His *Altercazione* is a philosophical and moral poem, in which the most sublime truths of the Platonic philosophy are displayed with equal clearness and sublimity. Lorenzo has also left, in his *Beoni*, an ingenious and lively satire against drunkenness; and in his Carnival songs, couplets of extreme gaiety, that accompanied the triumphal feasts which he gave to, and shared with, the people. In his *Canzoni a ballo*, we have other verses, which he sung himself, when he took a part in the dances exhibited in public; and in his *Orazioni* we find sacred hymns, which belong to the highest order of lyric poetry.

Such was the brilliant imagination, and such the grace and versatility of talent, of a man to whom poetry was but an amusement, scarcely noticed in his splendid political career; who, concentrating in himself all the powers of the repub-

lic, never allowed the people to perceive that they had relinquished their sovereignty; who, by the superiority of his character and of his talents, governed all Italy as he governed Florence, preserving it in peace, and averting, as long as he lived, those calamities with which, two years after his death, it was overwhelmed; who was, at the same time, the patron of the Platonic philosophy, the promoter of literature, the fellow-student of the learned, the friend of philosophers and poets, and the protector of artists; and who kindled and fanned the flame of genius in the breast of Michael Angelo.

CHAPTER XII.

Politiano, Pulci, Boiardo, and Ariosto.

THE century which, after the death of Petrarch, had been devoted, by the Italians, to the study of antiquity, during which literature experienced no advance, and the Italian language seemed to retrograde, was not, however, lost to the powers of imagination. Poetry, on its first revival, had not received sufficient nourishment. The fund of knowledge, of ideas, and of images, which she called to her aid, was too restricted. The three great men of the fourteenth century, whom we first presented to the attention of the reader, had, by the sole force of their genius, attained a degree of erudition, and a sublimity of thought, far beyond the spirit of their age. These qualities were entirely personal; and the rest of the Italian bards, like the Provençal poets, were reduced, by the poverty of their ideas, to have recourse to those continual attempts at wit, and to that mixture of unintelligible ideas and incoherent images, which render the perusal of them so fatiguing. The whole of the fifteenth century was employed

in extending, in every sense, the knowledge and resources of the friends of the muses. Antiquity was unveiled to them in all its elevated characters, its severe laws, its energetic virtues, and its beautiful and engaging mythology; in its subtle and profound philosophy, its overpowering eloquence, and its delightful poetry. Another age was required to knead afresh the clay for the formation of a nobler race. At the close of the century, a divine breath animated the finished statue, and it started into life.

It was in the society of Lorenzo de' Medici, in the midst of his friends and of the objects of his protection, that several of those men of genius appeared, who shed so brilliant a glory on Italy, in the sixteenth century. Amongst these, the most distinguished rank may be assigned to Politiano, who opened, to the Italian poets, the career of epic and lyric fame.

Angelo Politiano was born on the twenty-fourth of July, 1454, at Monte Pulciano (Mons Politianus), a castle, of which he adopted the name, instead of that of Ambrogini, borne by his father. He applied himself with ardour to those scholastic studies which engaged the general mind, in the fifteenth century. Some Latin and Greek epigrams, which he wrote between the age of thirteen and seventeen, surprised his teachers, and the companions of his studies. But the work which introduced him to Lorenzo de' Medici, and which had

the greatest influence on his age, was a poem on a tournament, in which Julian de' Medici was the victor, in 1468. From that time, Lorenzo received Politiano into his palace; made him the constant companion of his labours and his studies; provided for all his necessities, and soon afterwards confided to him the education of his children. Politiano, after this invitation, attached himself to the more serious studies of the Platonic philosophy, of antiquity, and of law; but his poem in honour of the tournament of Julian de' Medici, remains a monument of the distinguished taste of the fifteenth century.

This celebrated fragment commences like a large work. In fact, if Politiano had merely intended to celebrate the tournament in which Julian was victor, he would have found it very difficult to finish his poem; since, in one hundred and fifty stanzas, forming a book and a half, he only arrives at the first preparations for the tournament. But I willingly suppose that his design was of a more extended nature, and more worthy of the epic muse. He probably intended, after the death of Julian, to which he alludes in the second book, to combine, in a chivalrous description, all that could be found interesting in the character of this young prince, whose loves he was recording. Politiano, indeed, must soon have discovered that he had not made choice of a hero, who could excite either his own admiration or

that of his reader. Events and actions were wanting; and this was, doubtless, his reason for abandoning his work, almost at its commencement. But this mere opening of a long poem will not suffer from comparison with those of the greatest writers; and neither Tasso nor Ariosto exceed Politiano in his management of the octave stanza, in the spirit of his narration, in the grace and vivacity of his colouring, and in his union of an enchanting harmony with the richest and most varied description. The poet represents Julian in the flower of his youth, devoted to the brilliant career of manly exercises, aspiring after glory, and contemning the shafts of love.* He

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* Nel vago tempo di sua verde etate,
Spargendo ancor pe 'l volto il primo fiore,
Ne avendo il bel Giulio ancor provate
Le dolci acerbe cure che dà amore,
Viveasi lieto in pace, in libertate,
Talor frenando un gentil corridore
Che gloria fù de' Ciciliani armenti;
Con esso a correr contendea co' venti.

Ora a guisa saltar di leopardo,
Or dentro fea rotarlo in brieve giro;
Or fea ronzar per l' aer un lento dardo,
Dando sovente a fere agro martiro;
Cotal viveasi 'l giovane gagliardo,
Ne pensando al suo fato acerbo e diro,
Ne certo ancor de' suoi futuri pianti,
Solea gabbarsi de gli afflitti amanti.

allures the young companions of his games and exercises, from a weakness which he despises; he conducts them to the chace; and, himself the most agile, the most ardent, and the bravest of all, he traverses the forest, and slays the fiercest of its inhabitants. But Love, indignant to see his empire thus contemned, draws him off from the pursuit, by the means of a beautiful white hind, which separates him from his comrades, and leads him, by various windings, into a flowery mead, where Simonetta presents herself to his view, while the enchanted hind vanishes in air.*

Ah! quante ninfe per lui sospirorno!
Ma fù si altero sempre il giovinetto
Che mai le ninfe amanti lo piegorno,
Mai potè riscaldarsi 'l freddo petto.
Facea sovente pe' boschi soggiorno:
Inculto sempre e rigido in aspetto,
Il volto difendea dal solar raggio,
Con ghirlanda di pino, o verde faggio.

Lib. 1. *Stanz.* 8.

* Candida è ella, e candida la vesta,
Ma pur di rose e fior dipinta e d' erba;
Lo inannellato crin de l'aurea testa
Scende in la fronte umilmente superba.
Ridele attorno tutta la foresta,
E quanto può sue cure disacerba,
Ne l'atto regalmente è mansueta,
E pur col ciglio le tempeste acqueta.

Julian now sees only the fair Ligurian; forgets the chace, and foregoes his resolves against the power of Love. Cupid, in the mean time, proud of his conquest, flies to the palace of his mother, in the Isle of Cyprus, and boasts of his success; and the description of this enchanted palace has served as a model to Ariosto and to Tasso, for the enchanted domes of Alcina and of Armida.* This

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Folgoran gli occhi d'un dolce sereno,
Ove sue faci tien Cupido ascose:
L' aer d' intornò'si fa tutto ameno
Ovunque gira le luci amorose;
Di celeste letizia il volto ha pieno,
Dolce dipinto di ligustri e rose.
Ogni aura tace al suo parlar divino,
E canta ogni augelletto in suo latino.

Lib. 1. *Stanz.* 43.

* Vagheggia Cipri un dilettoso monte
Che del gran Nilo i sette corni vede,
Al primo rosseggiar de l'orizzonte,
Ove poggiar non lice a mortal piede.
Nel giogo un verde colle alza la fronte,
Sott' esso aprico un lieto pratel siede;
U' scherzando tra fior, lascive aurette
Fan dolcemente tremolar l'erbette.

Corona un muro d' or l' estreme sponde
Con valle umbrosa di schietti arboscelli,
Ove in sù rami, fra novelle fronde,
Cantan gli loro amor soavi augelli,

description may, perhaps, be too far extended, as the action of the poem is not accelerated by it, and the poet indulges himself too far in his pictures of mythology. In the second book, Simonetta, arrayed in the armour of Pallas, appears to Julian in a dream. She reminds him, that it is only by valour that a hero should think of obtaining her heart. Julian awakes, amidst the aspirations of glory and of love.*

Sentesi un grato mormorio de l' onde
Che fan duo freschi e lucidi ruscelli,
Versando dolce con amar liquore,
Ove arma l' oro de suoi strali amore.

Ne mai le chiome del giardino eterno
Tenera brina o fresca neve imbianca:
Ivi non osa entrar ghiacciato verno;
Non vento l' erba o gli arboscelli stanca.
Ivi non volgon gli anni il lor quaderno;
Ma lieta primavera mai non manca,
Che i suoi crin biondi e crespi a l' aura spiega
E mille fiori in ghirlandetta lega.

[For a translation of the above stanzas, and of some others, the reader is referred to the note at the conclusion of the present chapter.—*Tr.*]

* Cosi dicea Cupido, e gia la gloria
Scendea giù folgorando ardente vampo,
Con essa poesia, con essa istoria
Volavan tutte accese del suo lampo.
Costei parea che ad acquistar vittoria
Rapisse Giulio orribilmente in campo,
E che l' arme di Palla alla sua donna
Spogliasse, e lei lasciasse in bianca gonna.

But here Politiano has relinquished his work, and leaves us to regret, either that a subject, of a more noble nature, and more exempt from flattery, had not animated his genius, or that too severe a taste caused him to abandon that which he had already chosen.

Politiano had the honour of reviving, on the modern stage, the tragedies of the ancients; or rather, he created a new kind of pastoral tragedy, a description of poetry on which Tasso did not disdain to employ his genius. The fable of Or-

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Poi Giulio di sue spoglie armava tutto,
E tutto fiammeggiar lo facea d'auro,
Quando era al fin del guereggiar condutto
Al capo gl' intrecciava oliva e lauro.
Ivi tornar parea sua gioia in lutto,
Vedeasi tolto il suo dolce tesauro,
Vedea sua ninfe, in trista nube avvolta,
Dagli occhi crudelmente essergli tolta.

L'aria tutta parea divenir bruna,
E tremar tutto de l' abisso il fondo;
Parea sanguigna in ciel farsi la luna
E cader giù le stelle nel profondo;
Poi vedea lieta in forma di fortuna,
Sorger sua ninfa, e rabbellirsi il mondo;
E prender lei di sua vita governo
E lui con seco far per fama eterno.

Sotto cotali ambagi al giovanetto
Fù mostro de' suoi fati il leggier corso,
Troppo felice, se nel suo diletto
Non mettea morte acerba il crudel morso, etc.

pheus, *Favola di Orfeo*, of Politiano, was performed at the court of Mantua, in 1483, on occasion of the return of the Cardinal Gonzaga. It was composed in two days. It is not without regret that we contemplate the fine genius of Politiano. Before the age of nineteen, without a model or a predecessor, he had successfully attempted the epic and tragic walks of poetry, and has left us poems which, though little more than fragments, exact our high admiration. To what height of fame might he not have aspired, if he had not abandoned the Italian muse for Latin verse and for philosophical works, which are now no longer perused!

The universal homage paid to Virgil had a decided influence on the rising drama. The scholars were persuaded that this cherished poet combined in himself all the different kinds of excellence; and, as they created a drama before they possessed a theatre, they imagined that dialogue, rather than action, was the essence of the dramatic art. The Bucolics appeared to them a species of comedies or tragedies, less animated, it is true, but more poetical than the dramas of Terence and of Seneca, or, perhaps, of the Greeks. They attempted, indeed, to unite these two kinds; to give interest, by action, to the tranquil reveries of the shepherds, and to preserve a pastoral charm in the more violent expression of passion. The Orpheus, though divided into five

acts, though mingled with chorus, and terminating with a tragic incident, is still rather an eclogue than a drama. The love of Aristæus for Eurydice; the flight and death of the latter, who is deplored by the dryads; the lamentation of Orpheus; his descent into hell; and his punishment at the hands of the Bacchantes, form the subject of the five acts, or rather of the five little sketches lightly strung together. Each act contains little more than from fifty to one hundred verses. A short dialogue explains the incidents between the acts; and he thus presents us with an ode, or a song, an elegy, or a lyric poem, which appears to have been the principal object of the author, and the essence of his poetry. He makes use of various metres, the *terza rima*, the octave stanza, and even the more involved couplets of the *canzoni*, for the dialogue; and the lyric pieces are almost all supported by a burden. Nothing, indeed, can less resemble our present tragedy, or that of the ancients. The Orpheus of Politiano, nevertheless, produced a revolution in poetry. The charm of the decorations, united to the beauty of the verse, and the music attached to the words, exciting interest at the same time that it gratified the mind, combined to lead the way to the most sublime enjoyment which the Muse can bestow, and gave birth to the dramatic art. At the same time, the scrupulous imitation of antiquity, prepared, in another manner, the revival of the

theatre. After the year 1470, the academy of learned men and poets of Rome undertook, for the better revival of the ancients, to represent, in Latin, some of the comedies of Plautus. This example, and that of Politiano, were soon followed. The taste for theatrical performances was renewed with greater eagerness, as it was regarded as an essential part of classical antiquity. It was not yet supported by the contributions of the spectators, but formed, as in Rome and in Greece, a part of the public, and often of the religious ceremonies. The sovereigns, who at this epoch placed all their glory in the protection of letters and of the arts, endeavoured to surpass each other, in erecting, on occasions of solemnity, a theatre, for the purpose of a single representation. The scholars and the court disputed for the honour of the parts, in the performance of the piece, which was sometimes translated from the Greek or Latin, and at other times was the composition of some modern poet, in imitation of the ancients. Italy boasted of exhibiting, annually, two theatrical representations: the one at Ferrara or at Milan, the other at Rome or at Naples. All the neighbouring princes, within reach, repaired thither, with their courts and retinue. The magnificence of the spectacle, the enormous cost, and the gratitude for an unbought pleasure, disarmed the severe judgment of the public. The records of the Italian cities, in presenting to us the recol-

lection of these representations, speak of them always in terms of unqualified admiration. Thus, it was less the applause of the public than the restoration of the classics, which the poets had in view in their compositions. They confined themselves to the most faithful copy of the ancients; and the imitation of Seneca being equally classical with that of Sophocles, many of the first dramatic attempts of the poets of the fifteenth century, contain tumid declamations, without either action or interest, and all the faults of the Roman tragedies.

About the same time, that style of poetry which was destined to form the glory of Ariosto, began to be cultivated. Luigi Pulci, a Florentine, the youngest of three brothers, all poets, composed and read, at the table of Lorenzo de' Medici, his *Morgante Maggiore;* and Matteo Maria Boiardo, Count of Scandia, wrote his *Orlando Innamorato.* Both these poems are chivalrous romances in verse, or rather in stanzas of eight verses, of the form which became peculiar to the epic poetry of Italy; but neither the one nor the other can merit the name of an epic poem. The chivalrous romances, composed for the most part in French, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, were early circulated in Italy, and we learn from Dante, that they were already very much read in his day. In their origin, they accorded with the vivacity of the prevailing religious

sentiment, with the violence of the passions, and with the taste for adventures, which animated the Christians of the first crusades. The general ignorance of the times favoured the powers of imagination. The vulgar looked rather to some supernatural agency, than to nature, for the explication of events, and admitted the marvellous, as a part of the system to which their daily terrors and hopes had habituated them. At the close of the fifteenth century, when the poets possessed themselves of all the old romances of chivalry, in order to give a variety to the adventures of their heroes, and to versify these legends, the belief in the marvellous was much diminished; and the warriors, who still bore the names and the armour of knights, were far from calling to recollection the loyalty, the true love, and the valour of the ancient Paladins. Thus, the adventures which the ancient romancers recounted with an invincible gravity, could not be repeated by the Italians, without a mixture of mockery; and the spirit of the age did not admit, in the Italian language, a subject entirely serious. He who made pretensions to fame, was compelled to write in Latin. The choice of the vulgar tongue was the indication of a humorous subject; and the Italian language had, in fact, adopted, since the time of Boccaccio, a character of *naïveté* mingled with satire, which still remains, and which is particularly remarkable in Ariosto.

It was not all at once that the romantic poets of Italy arrived at a just measure, in the mixture of humour with fabulous narrative. Luigi Pulci (1431-1487) in his Morgante Maggiore, which first appeared in 1485, is alternately vulgar and burlesque, serious and insipid, or religious. The principal characters of his romance are the same which first appeared in the fabulous chronicle of Turpin, and in the romances of Adenez, in the thirteenth century. His real hero is Orlando, rather than Morgante. He takes up the Paladin of Charlemagne, at the moment when the intrigues of Ganelon de Mayence compel him to fly from the court. One of the first adventures of Orlando is a combat with three giants, who lay siege to an abbey. Two of these he kills, and makes the third, Morgante, prisoner; converts and baptizes him; and thenceforth selects him as his brother in arms, and the partaker in all his adventures. Although this romance consists entirely of warlike encounters, we do not find in it that enthusiasm of valour which captivates in Ariosto, and in the old romancers. Orlando and Rinaldo are not vanquished, but they do not inspire us with a confidence in their invincibility. Morgante alone, armed with the hammer of a huge bell, crushes all that he encounters; but his supernatural strength less exalts his bravery than his brutality. On the other hand, throughout the poem, a secondary part is assigned to the

women. We do not find it imbued with that gallantry and devotion, which we are accustomed to consider as the characteristic trait of chivalry; and in this we have, perhaps, nothing to regret, as the habitual coarseness of the language of Pulci was little suited to the delineation of tender sentiments. The critics of Italy extol him for the purity of his style; but it consists only in his fidelity to the Tuscan dialect, of which he adopted the proverbs, and all the vulgar expressions.* This poem of twenty-eight cantos, each canto containing from one to two hundred stanzas, after having satiated us with the recital of combats against the Moors, and of ill-connected adventures, terminates with the death of Orlando at

* Pulci commences all his cantos by a sacred invocation, and the interests of religion are constantly intermingled with the adventures of his story, in a manner capricious and little instructive. We know not how to reconcile this monkish spirit with the semi-pagan character of society under Lorenzo de' Medici, nor whether we ought to accuse Pulci of gross bigotry or of profane derision. This mixture of religion, of affected sublimity, of solemn insipidity, and of vulgar expression, will sufficiently appear from the opening of the ninth canto:

O Felice alma d' ogni grazia piena,
Fida colonna, e speme graziosa,
Vergine sacra, umile e Nazzarena,
Perche tu se' di Dio nel cielo sposa,
Con la tua mano infino al fin mi mena,
Che di mia fantasia truovi ogni chiosa
Per la tua sol benignità, ch' è molta,
Accio che 'l mio contar piaccia a chi ascolta.

Roncesvalles, and the discovery and punishment of the treachery of Ganelon.

Febo avea già ne l'Oceano il volto,
E bagnava fra l' onde i suoi crin d'auro,
E dal nostro emispero aveva tolto
Ogni splendor, lasciando il suo bel lauro,
Dal qual fù già miseramente sciolto:
Era nel tempo che più scalda il Tauro,
Quando il Danese et gli altri al padiglione
Si ritrovar del grande Erminione.

Erminion fe' far pel campo festa:
Parvegli questo buon cominciamento:
E Mattafolle avea drieto gran gesta
Di gente armata a suo contentamento,
E' ndosso aveva una sua sopravesta,
Dov' era un Macometto in puro argento:
Pel campo a spasso con gran festa andava,
Di sua prodezza ognun molto parlava.

E si doleva Mattafolle solo
Ch' Astolfo un tratto non venga a cadere;
E minacciava in mezzo del suo stuolo,
E porta una fenice per cimiere;
Astolfo ne sare' venuto a volo
Per cadere una volta a suo piacere;
Ma Ricciardetto, che sapea l' omore
Non vuol per nulla ch' egli sbuchi fore.

Carlo mugghiando per la mastra sala
Com' un lion famelico arrabiato,
Ne va con Ganellon che batte ogni ala
Per gran letizia, e spesso ha simulato,
Dicendo; ah lasso, la tua fame cala
Or fusse qui Rinaldo almen tornato;
Che se ci fusse il conte e Ulivieri
Io sarei fuor di mille stran pensieri.

The Count Boiardo, a statesman, governor of Reggio, and attached to the court of Hercules I. of Ferrara (1430-1494), composed, about the same time as Pulci, his Orlando Innamorato, drawn nearly from the same sources; but his death, which occurred in 1494, prevented its completion, and his poem was not printed until the following year. This poem, which is only known, at the present day, as improved by Berni, who remodelled it sixty years afterwards, is more attractive than that of Pulci, from the variety and novelty of the adventures, the richness of the colouring, and the interest excited by the valour of the hero. The female sex, who form the soul of the chivalrous romance, appear here with due honour; and Angelica displays her charms, and exercises supreme power over the hearts of the knights.

All the Moorish and Christian warriors whose names have become almost historical, receive from Boiardo an existence and a character which they have ever since preserved. We are informed that he took the names of many of them, Gradasso, Sacripante, Agramante, and Mandricardo, from the vassals of his own fief of Scandiano, where these families still exist. It is added, that he was in want of a more high-sounding name for his redoubtable Moorish hero, and that, one day, whilst at the chace, the name of Rodomonte suggested itself to him. He instantly returned to his castle on the gallop, rang his bells, and fired his can-

non, as for the solemnization of a festival; to the astonishment of the peasants, who had never before heard of this new saint. The style of Boiardo did not correspond with the vivacity of his imagination. It is negligent, and his verses are harsh and fatiguing; and it was not without reason that, in the following age, it was thought necessary to remodel his work.*

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* As the poem of Boiardo is become somewhat rare, I shall give, as a specimen of his style, the six first stanzas of his poem, which correspond to the first, fifth and ninth of Berni. In comparing them with the poem of the latter, we shall see how Berni has substituted his own facility and grace of expression, for the harsh and antiquated language of his predecessor. (*Edit. in* 4to. 1539.)

Signori e cavalier, che v' adunati
Per odir cose dilettose e nove,
Stati attenti, quieti, et ascoltati
La bell' historia che 'l mio canto move;
Et odereti i gesti smisurati
L' alta fatica e le mirabil prove
Che fece il franco Orlando per amore,
Nel tempo del rè Carlo, imperatore.

Non vi par già, signor, maraviglioso
Odir cantar d'Orlando innamorato:
Che qualunque nel mondo e più orgoglioso
È d'amor vinto al tutto e soggiogato.
Ne forte braccio, ne ardire animoso,
Ne scudo o maglia, ne brando affilato,
Ne altra possanza può mai far diffesa
Ch' al fin non sia d'amor battuta e presa.

The Italian language was thus at length perfected. The versification had received its rules; the

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Questa novella è nota a poca gente,
Perche Turpino istesso la nascose,
Credendo forsi a quel conte valente
Esser le sue scritture dispettose,
Poi che contra ad amor pur fù perdente
Colui che vinse tutte l' altre cose:
Dico d'Orlando il cavalier adatto;
Non più parole hormai, veniamo al fatto.

La vera historia di Turpin ragiona
Che regnava in la terra d'Oriente,
Di là dal India, un gran rè, di corona
Di stato e di ricchezze si potente,
E si gagliardo de la sua persona,
Che tutt 'il mondo stimava niente.
Gradasso nome avea quell' amirante
Ch' à cor di drago, e membra di gigante.

Et si come gli advien a gran signori,
Che pur quel voglion che non ponno avere,
E quando son difficultà maggiori
La disiata cosa ad ottenere,
Pongon il regno spesso in grand' errori,
Ne posson quel che voglion possedere,
Cosi bramava quel pagan gagliardo
Sol Durindana e 'l bon destrier Baiardo.

Onde per tutt' il suo gran tenitoro
Fece la gente ne l'arme assembrare;
Che ben sapeva quel, che per tesoro
Ne 'l brando ne 'l corsier potria 'quistare;
Duo mercadanti si erano coloro
Che vendean le sue merci troppo care;
Però destina di passar in Franza,
Et acquistarle con sua gran possanza.

stanza, most appropriate to epic poetry, had already been employed in works of length; the romances of chivalry were versified, and their marvellous adventures described in glowing colours. But, before Ariosto, the world had no idea of that inexpressible charm which the same adventures, recounted in the same stanza, were destined to receive from his pen. Genius, compared with talent, is like the oak compared with the low plants at its feet. The oak shoots, indeed, from the same earth, and is subject to the same laws of vegetation. But it aspires to a higher region of air; and, when we view it in single majesty, we forget that the humble shrubs, beneath its shade, are in the same class of organization.

Lodovico Ariosto was born on the eighth day of September, 1474, at Reggio, of which place his father was governor, for the Duke of Ferrara. He was intended for the study of jurisprudence, and, like many other distinguished poets, he experienced a long struggle between the will of his father, who was anxious that he should pursue a profession, and his own feelings, which prompted him to the indulgence of his genius. After five years of unprofitable study, his father at length consented to his devoting himself solely to literature. Ariosto then repaired to Rome; and it was there that he wrote in prose, before the year 1500, his comedy of *La Cassaria*, which, if not the earliest of the Italian comedies, may at least dispute this honour with the *Calandra* of Cardinal Bibbiena.

He soon afterwards gave to the public a second comedy, *I Suppositi*. At the same time, we find him writing sonnets and love *canzoni*, in the manner of Petrarch; but we know not of whom he was enamoured, nor whether his passion was real or feigned. He was not of a melancholy or enthusiastic temperament; his conversation was that of a man of wit and judgment; his manners were polished and reserved, and no peculiarities betrayed the poet in him. The death of his father, in 1500, recalled him to Ferrara; and the smallness of his fortune induced him to attach himself to the service of the Cardinal Ippolito of Este, the second son of Hercules I. He accompanied the cardinal in his travels, and was employed by him in many important negotiations. But, although skilful in business, he never pursued it without a secret regret; until, to the chagrin of the prince, he began to occupy himself with the trifling pursuits of poetry. About the year 1505, he commenced his *Orlando Furioso*, and he prosecuted this long task, for eleven years, amidst the constant distraction of business. He read his cantos, as they were finished, to his friends, and to persons of taste in Ferrara; and he paid a scrupulous attention to their criticisms, in order to polish and perfect his style. He was at length enabled, in the year 1516, to give the first edition of this poem, which now contains, in forty-six cantos, 4831 stanzas, and 38,648 verses. The reception given to the

Orlando Furioso in Italy, was that of the most lively enthusiasm. Before the year 1532, four editions had appeared. The Cardinal Ippolito was the only person insensible to the merits of Ariosto; and, in 1517, they separated with feelings of mutual distaste, on the poet refusing to accompany him into Hungary. A ruinous law-suit, however, constrained him, in a little time, to return again to court. Alfonso I. received him into his service, and gave him an employment under the government. Ariosto was commissioned to suppress the banditti of the Garfagnana, and we are assured that, amidst those lawless men, his poetical fame preceded him, and served him as a passport. The Duke of Ferrara gave him, at length, an appointment more congenial to his taste; that of superintending the erection of a theatre, and directing the magnificent representations which he intended to give. Ariosto employed, in this manner, the last years of his life. With a very limited income, he provided for his children. It is not known who was their mother, nor whether Ariosto was married to her. He died on the sixth of June, 1533. His brother Gabriel, and his son Virginio, erected a monument to him, which, after many injuries, was restored, in 1612, by one of his descendants.

The Orlando Furioso of Ariosto is a poem universally known. It has been translated into all

the modern tongues; and by the sole charm of its adventures, independently of its poetry, has long been the delight of the youth of all countries. It may therefore be taken for granted, that all the world is aware that Ariosto undertook to sing the Paladins and their amours at the court of Charlemagne, during the fabulous wars of this monarch against the Moors. If it were required to assign an historical epoch to the events contained in this poem, we must place them before the year 778, when Orlando was slain at the battle of Roncesvalles, in an expedition which Charlemagne made, before he was emperor, to defend the frontiers of Spain. But it may be conjectured, that the romance writers have confounded the wars of Charles Martel against Abdelrahman, with those of Charlemagne; and have thus given rise to the traditions of the invasion of France by the Saracens, and of those unheard-of perils, from which the West of Europe was saved by the valour of the Paladins. Every reader knows that Orlando, of all the heroes of Ariosto the most renowned for his valour, became mad, through love for Angelica; and that his madness, which is only an episode in this long poem, has given its name to the whole of the composition, although it is not until the twenty-third canto that Orlando is deprived of his senses.

It does not appear that Ariosto had the intention of writing a strictly epic poem. He had rejected the advice of Bembo, who wished him

to compose his poem in Latin, the only language, in the opinion of the cardinal, worthy of a serious subject. Ariosto thought, perhaps, that an Italian poem should necessarily be light and sportive. He scorned the adopted rules of poetry, and proved himself sufficiently powerful to create new ones. His work may, indeed, be said to possess an unity of subject; the great struggle between the Christians and the Moors, which began with the invasion of France, and terminated with her deliverance. This was the subject which he had proposed to himself in his argument. The lives and adventures of his several heroes, contributed to this great action; and were so many subordinate episodes, which may be admitted in epic poetry, and which, in so long a work, cannot be considered as destroying the unity.

But Ariosto seems to have designedly thrown off the embarrassment of an unity of action. He takes up the subject and the hero, as left to him by Boiardo, in the Orlando Innamorato. He commences his poem in the midst of combats, and in a moment of universal confusion; and, notwithstanding this, he never makes us acquainted with the antecedent events, as if he thought that every one must have read the work of his predecessor. In fact, it is difficult to comprehend the disposition of the plot of the Orlando Furioso, if we have not previously perused the Orlando Innamorato,

or if we are not, at least, masters of those traditions of romance, with which, in the time of Ariosto, the world was more familiar. He pays no regard to the simultaneous introduction of his principal personages. Towards the conclusion of the poem, we find new characters making their appearance, who engage our attention by important adventures; and who, so far from contributing to a developement, might serve equally well to fill a second poem of the same length as the first. In the course of the action, Ariosto, playing with his readers, seems to delight in continually misleading them, almost to the exhaustion of their patience; and allows them no opportunity of viewing the general subject of this poem, and of bringing the individual events under one view. On the contrary, he introduces each of his personages in their turn, as if he were the hero of the poem; and, when he has drawn him into an embarrassing situation, and has sufficiently excited the curiosity and anxiety of the reader, he abandons him, in his sportiveness, for some other character, or for another part of his story, wholly at variance with the first. In short, as he commenced, without assigning any reason why he so commenced, so he concludes with equal caprice, without informing us why he thus ends his poem. Many of his principal actors, it is true, are dead, and he moreover disposes of a great number of infidels in his last cantos, in order to

deliver himself, as it were, from their opposition. But, in the course of his poem, he has so entirely accustomed us to see unnumbered hosts issuing from unknown deserts, and has so entirely carried our ideas beyond the boundaries of possibility, that we see without surprise, at the end of the forty-sixth canto, a new invasion of France by the Moors, no less formidable than the first; or, rather, a new war in the north, succeeding that of the south; and Ariosto has himself considered it in this light, in the commencement of a new poem, of which he has given us only five cantos. In this, the intrigues of Ganelon excite the Saxons to arms; and the most valiant of the knights, as Astolfo and Ruggiero, are again made captive by Alcina.*

* The fourth volume of M. Ginguené, which I had not an opportunity of seeing before the completion of this work, proves that the hero of Ariosto was Ruggiero, and not Orlando; and that the action of the poem ought to finish with the marriage of this fabulous ancestor of the house of Este with Bradamante. The secret design of the poet is thus explained, and brought before the eyes of the reader by the French critic, in a way as lively as his whole analysis is novel and engaging. At the same time, I cannot but regret the feeling thus induced. The value of these noble monuments of the human mind is diminished in our eyes, when we view them only as the vehicle of a flattering and ingenious compliment. It is surely quite sufficient for the sons of genius to consecrate some passages, by way of episode, to commemorate their benefactors, without converting the entire structure of their greatest works, into a theatre for the praises of those who are so little worthy of them.

The poem of Ariosto is, therefore, only a fragment of the history of the knights of Charlemagne and their amours; and it has neither beginning nor end, farther than any particular detached period may be said to possess them. This want of unity essentially injures the interest and the general impression which we ought to derive from the work. But the avidity with which all nations, and all ages, have read Ariosto, even when his story is despoiled of its poetic charms by translation, sufficiently proves that he had the art of giving to its individual parts an interest which it does not possess as a whole. Above all, he has communicated to it a spirit of valour. In spite of the habitual absurdity of those chivalrous combats; in spite of the disproportion of the causes with their effects, and the raillery which seems inseparable from the narration of his battles, Ariosto always contrives to excite in us an enthusiasm and an intoxication of valour which create a love of enterprise in every reader. One of the most exalted enjoyments of man, consists in the full developement of his energies and power. The great art of the poet of romance is, to awaken a proper confidence in our own resources, by raising against his hero all the forces of nature and the spells of magic, and by exhibiting him as triumphant, by the superiority of his will and courage, over all the powers which had conspired his ruin.

In the world into which Ariosto transports us,

we find also another source of enjoyment. This world, essentially poetic, in which all the vulgar interests of life are suspended; where love and honour are the only laws, and the only motives to action, and no factitious wants, no cold calculations chill the soul; where all the pains and all the disquietudes incident to our lot, and the inequalities of rank and of riches, are forgotten; this imaginary world charms away all our cares. We delight in making excursions into it, and in discovering in it a refuge from the distractions of real life. We derive, indeed, no instruction from these reveries; for the difference between the world of romance and the real world is such, that we cannot, in the one, make the least use of the lessons received from the other. It is, in fact, a remarkable characteristic of this species of poetry, that it is impossible to derive from it any kind of instruction. But we receive no little gratification from an occupation of the mind, on a subject which disclaims all admonition; and the dream of fancy, without any defined object, is, perhaps, the real essence of poetry, which ought never to be a means, but is in itself its only proper end.

It is true, indeed, that this world of romance is not the creation of Ariosto. The scene of the Orlando Furioso and that of the Orlando Innamorato, is exactly the same; and both authors, in availing themselves of the fabulous authority of Archbishop Turpin, have greatly profited by the

brilliant invention of the French *Trouvères*, who, in the thirteenth century, composed many romances on the reign of Charlemagne: romances, which the wandering minstrels sung in the streets, after translating them into Italian verse, adapted to the taste of the common people. If, however, the representation of these ancient manners of and the spirit of past times, was the work of several successive poets, yet Ariosto may be said to have completed this elegant and ingenious edifice. Chivalry, with him, shines forth in all its dignity, delicacy, and grace. The most exalted sentiments of honour, the protection of the feeble, a devoted respect for the female sex, and a scrupulous performance of promises, form the ruling spirit of the age into which he transports us. These sentiments are professed and felt by all his personages; and the fanciful race of knights have received from him a being and a name.

The magic and sorcery which pervade so great a portion of the poem of Ariosto, and which have been, in a manner, consecrated by the Christian poets, were borrowed chiefly from the Arabian tales, and had been transmitted to the Latins by their intercourse with the people of the East. The Christian warriors themselves had, indeed, many gross superstitions. They had faith in amulets, which they imagined could render them invulnerable. They believed that certain ill-omened words and charms could rob them of their strength.

Continually accustomed to the use of arms, they were disposed to believe that those of the finest steel and the most approved temper, possessed in themselves something marvellous. But their superstition often carried with it a more sombre character. Their priests had inspired them with a thousand terrors, which were allied to a persecuting faith. Evil spirits and ghosts incessantly troubled their imaginations; and the same warriors, who had braved a thousand deaths in the field, were palsied with horror, in crossing a burial-place by night. This superstition, the result of the frightful pictures of Purgatory and Hell, is constantly found in the German poets; but it is entirely strange to Ariosto and to the writers of romance, whom he had studied in Spanish and in French, with both of which languages he was intimately acquainted. The supernatural agency, which Ariosto employs, is divested of all terror. It is a brilliant heightening of the energies of man, which embodies the dreams of the imagination; the developement of the passions of the living, not the unnatural apparition of the dead. The Genii of the East, whom the most ancient fables have represented as subservient to the ring of Solomon, are the prototypes of the fairies of the North. Their power is exercised, as in the Arabian fables, in splendid creations, in a taste for the arts, and in a love of pleasure. In short, Alcina, Atlas, the ring of Angelica, and the Hippogriff,

are the creations of Islamism; whilst the evil spirit of the mountain, and the spectre of the castle, who shakes his fetters and disturbs the hours of repose by his frightful visits, are European superstitions, allied to Christianity and to the mythology of Scandinavia and of Germany.

But, if Ariosto was not the inventor of the mythology which he has employed, nor of the heroes whom he has introduced, he has not the less exhibited, in his poem, the most brilliant imagination, and the most fertile invention. Each of his knights has his own story, and each of these stories forms a tissue of agreeable adventures, which awake the curiosity, and often excite the liveliest interest. Many of these adventures have furnished excellent dramatic subjects to succeeding poets; and the loves of Angelica and Medoro, those of Bradamante and Ruggiero, and of Genevra of Scotland, and Ariodante, form a world of traditionary poetry, not less fruitful than that of the Greeks.

It must be confessed, notwithstanding, that the dramatic powers of Ariosto do not equal his talent for description, and that his invention is more successful with regard to events than to character. He weaves a plot in the most novel and engaging manner. Our sympathy is excited from the commencement, and increases with the embarrassment of the situations. All the incidents are unexpected; almost all are of powerful interest; and the scene and action are vividly presented to

our eyes. But, when the poet, at length, brings forward, as a speaker, the character which he has placed in the most difficult situation, he suddenly disappoints his reader, and shows us that his imagination, and not his heart, was the source of composition. Thus, in the tenth canto, Bireno, the lover and husband of Olympia, arrives with her in a desert island. Already weary of her, he meditates her desertion, without her having the least presentiment of his perfidy. The small bay in which they disembark, the smiling spot on which they pitch their tent, and the serenity and confidence of Olympia, are admirably described. Whilst she sleeps, Bireno forsakes her; and the manner in which Olympia, at the break of day, half awaking from her slumbers, seeks for her lover in the couch which he has deserted, in the tent which he has abandoned, and on the border of the sea, and at length, from the point of a rock, sees his vessel, coursing the distant main, is painted with a delicacy of colouring, and a feeling of melancholy which profoundly penetrate the heart. But when Olympia speaks, and expresses, in seven stanzas, her regrets and her fears, she instantly checks our emotion; for, in these stanzas, there is not a single verse that responds to the throbbings of the heart. It is, doubtless, the same failing which deprives the personages of Ariosto of individual character. Even Orlando, the hero who gives his name to the poem, differs little from Rinaldo, Ruggiero, and

Griffone, or from the valiant Saracen knights. In respect to valour and bodily prowess, as they are all raised above the level of nature, there are no means of distinguishing them from each other; and, as to characters, there are properly only two, to which all the rest may be referred. One half of the heroes, Christians as well as Pagans, are mild, generous, and benevolent; the other half, savage, arrogant, and cruel. Nor are the characters of the women more happily delineated. That of Angelica scarcely leaves a recollection which we can seize. All the others are confounded together, except that of the Amazon Bradamante, the only one for whom we, perhaps, feel a personal interest.

The versification of Ariosto is more distinguished for grace, sweetness, and elegance, than for strength. The opening of all his cantos is adorned, throughout, with the richest poetry; and the language is so perfectly harmonious, that no poet, either before or after him, can be, in this point, compared to him. Every description is a picture; and the eyes of the reader follow the pen of the poet. As he always sports with his subject, with his readers, and even with his style, he rarely soars, and never attempts that majestic flight which belongs to the epic muse. He even seeks facility and grace in negligence itself; and it often happens that he repeats many words of a verse in the following one, like the narrator of

a tale, who repeats his words in order to collect his thoughts.* The words are frequently thrown together negligently, and as if by chance. We perceive that the most eligible words are not made use of; that parts of lines are inserted for the sake of the rhyme; and that the poet has been desirous of writing like an *Improvisatore*, who, in reciting, is carried away by his subject, and contents himself with filling up his verse, in order to arrive sooner at the event, or description which has possessed his imagination. This negligence, in others, would be considered as a fault; but Ariosto, who gave a high polish to his verses, and who designedly left these irregularities, has in his language, when he surrenders himself to the impulse of his genius, such an inimitable grace, that we gladly acquiesce in his negligence, and admit it as a proof of his happy genius, and of the truth of his narration.

We occasionally meet with passages highly pathetic, in this light and graceful poet. Thus, the circumstance which has given a name to the poem, the pangs of love which caused the madness of Orlando, is gradually developed with a truth, delicacy of sentiment, and eloquence of passion, wholly unrivalled. The Paladin of Charlemagne finds traced, on the rock of a grotto,

* Ma quivi giunse
In fretta un Messaggier che gli disgiunse.
Vi giunse un Messaggier, etc.

verses by Medoro, in which he extols his bliss, derived from the partial love of Angelica.*

Three times he reads, as oft he reads again
The cruel lines: as oft he strives, in vain,
To give each sense the lie, and fondly tries
To disbelieve the witness of his eyes;
While at each word he feels the jealous smart,
And sudden coldness freezing at his heart.
Fix'd on the stone, in stiffening gaze, that proved
His secret pangs, he stood, with looks unmoved,
A breathing statue! while the godlike light
Of reason nearly seem'd eclipsed in night:
Confide in him, who, by experience, knows
This is the woe surpassing other woes!
From his sad brow the wonted cheer is fled;
Low on his breast declines his drooping head;
Nor can he find (while grief each sense o'erbears)
Voice for his plaints, or moisture for his tears:
Impatient sorrow seeks its way to force,
But with too eager haste retards the course.†

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* [The extracts are from Hoole's Translation.—*Tr.*]

† Tre volte e quattro e sei lesse lo scritto
Quello infelice, e pur cercando in vano
Che non vi fosse quel che v' era scritto,
E sempre lo vedea più chiaro e piano.
Et ogni volta, in mezzo il petto afflitto,
Stringersi il cor sentia con fredda mano;
Rimase al fin con gli occhi e con la mente
Fissi nel sasso, al sasso indifferente.

Fù alhora per uscir del sentimento;
Si tutto in preda del dolor si lassa:
Credete a chi n' ha fatto esperimento
Che questo e 'l duol che tutti gl' altri passa.

As when a full-brimm'd vase, with ample waist,
And slender entrance form'd, is downward plac'd,
And stands reversed, the rushing waters pent
All crowd at once to issue at the vent;
The narrow vent the struggling tide restrains,
And scarcely drop by drop, the bubbling liquor drains.

He still pauses; and he cannot believe that Angelica is faithless, until he is convinced by the recital of a shepherd, who had witnessed her infidelity. He flies into the forest, but in vain shuns the eye of man. He again sees the inscription on the rock, which converts his profound grief into rage.

Through the still night, the Earl, from shade to shade,
Thus lonely roved, and, when the day display'd
Its twilight gleam, chance to the fountain led
His wandering course, where first his fate he read
In fond Medoro's strains. The sight awakes
His torpid sense, each patient thought forsakes
His maddening heart, that rage and hatred breathes;
And from his side he swift the sword unsheathes.
He hews the rock, he makes the letters fly;
The shatter'd fragments mount into the sky:
Hapless the cave whose stones, the tree whose rind,
Bear with Angelica Medoro join'd!
From that cursed day no longer to receive,
And flocks or swains, with cooling shade, relieve;

Caduto gli era sopra il petto il mento,
La fronte priva di baldanza e bassa,
Ne potè aver, che 'l duol l' occupò tanto,
A le querele voce, humore al pianto.

Canto 23, *st.* 112, 113.

While that fair fountain, late so silvery pure,
Remain'd as little from his rage secure:
Together boughs and earthen clods he drew,
Crags, stones, and trunks, and in the waters threw;
Deep in its bed, with ooze and mud he piled
The murmuring current, and its spring defiled.
His limbs now moisten'd with a briny tide,
When strength no more his senseless wrath supplied,
Low on the turf he sunk, unnerved and spent,
All motionless, his looks on heaven intent,
Stretch'd without food or sleep; while thrice the sun
Had stay'd, and thrice his daily course had run.
The fourth dire morn, with frantic rage possess'd,
He rends the armour from his back and breast;
Here lies the helmet, there the bossy shield,
Cuishes and cuirass farther spread the field,
And all his other arms, at random strew'd,
In divers parts, he scatters through the wood;
Then, from his body, strips the covering vest,
And bares his sinewy limbs and hairy chest;
And now begins such feats of boundless rage,
As, far and near, the astonish'd world engage *.

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* E stanco al fin, e al fin di sudor molle,
Poi che la lena vinta non risponde
A lo sdegno, al grave odio, a l'ardente ira,
Cade sul prato, e verso il ciel sospira.

Afflitto e stanco al fin cade ne l'herba,
E ficca gli occhi al cielo, e non fa motto;
Senza cibo e dormir così si serba
Che 'l sol esce tre volte, e torna sotto.
Di crescer non cessò la pena acerba
Che fuor del senno al fin l'ebbe condotto.
Il quarto dì, dal gran furor commosso,
E maglie e piastre si stracciò di dosso.

Canto 23, *st.* 131.

We find another passage equally pathetic, where Ariosto recounts, in the twenty-fourth canto, the death of Zerbino, the generous son of the King of Scotland, who had collected together the arms which Orlando, in his madness, had left scattered in the field. He formed them into a trophy, to be preserved for the Paladin, when he should be restored to reason, and was soon called on to defend them, as the Moor, Mandricardo, had possessed himself of Durandal, the famous sword of Orlando. But, in his combat with this cruel enemy, the arms were too unequal. Those of Mandricardo were charmed; and the armour of Zerbino was shattered by every stroke of the terrible Durandal. The two damsels, who follow the warriors, prevail on them, at length, to suspend their combat, and to separate; but Zerbino's wounds were too deep to be staunched. In the midst of the forest, alone with Isabel, his love, his blood flows fast, his anguish increases, and life ebbs away.

Though scarce Zerbino now his seat maintains,
So fast his blood has flow'd, so fast it drains,
Yet self-reproach afflicts his noble mind,
For Durindana to the foe resign'd.
His pains increase; and soon, with shortening breath,
He feels the certain chill approach of death.
Th' enfeebled warrior now his courser stays,
And near a fountain's side his limbs he lays.
Ah! what avails the wretched virgin's grief?
What can she, here, to yield her lord relief?
In desert wilds for want she sees him die,
No friend to help, no peopled dwelling nigh,

Where she, for pity or reward, may find
Some skilful leech, his streaming wounds to bind.
In vain she weeps; in vain, with frantic cries,
She calls on Fortune, and condemns the skies.
"Why was I not in surging waters lost,
When first my vessel left Galicia's coast?"
Zerbino, as his dying eyes he turn'd
On her, while thus her cruel fate she mourn'd,
More felt her sorrows, than the painful strife
Of Nature, struggling on the verge of life.*

"My heart's sole treasure! may'st thou still (he said)
When I, alas! am number'd with the dead,
Preserve my love. Think not, for death I grieve;
But thee, thus guideless and forlorn, to leave,
Weighs heavy here. Oh! were my mortal date
Prolong'd to see thee in a happier state,
Bless'd were this awful hour; content, in death,
On that loved bosom to resign my breath.
But summon'd now, at Fate's unpitying call,
Unknown what future lot to thee may fall—
By those soft lips, by those fond eyes, I swear,
By those dear locks, that could my heart ensnare!
Despairing, to the shades of night I go,
Where thoughts of thee, left to a world of woe,

---

* Per debolezza più non potea gire,
Si che fermossi a piè d'una fontana;
Non sà che far, nè che si debba dire
Per aiutarlo la donzella humana.
Sol di disagio lo vede a morire,
Che quindi è troppo ogni città lontana,
Dove in quel punto al medico ricorra,
Che per pietade o per premio 'l soccorra.

Shall rend this faithful breast with deeper pains,
Than all that Hell's avenging realm contains."
At this, sad Isabella pour'd a shower
Of trickling tears, and, lowly bending o'er,
Close to his mouth her trembling lips she laid;
His mouth now pale, like some fair rose decay'd;
A vernal rose, that, cropp'd before the time,
Bends the green stalk, and withers ere its prime.

"Think not, (she said,) life of my breaking heart!
Without thy Isabella to depart:
Let no such fears thy dying bosom rend;
Where'er thou go'st, my spirit shall attend.
One hour to both shall like dismission give,
Shall fix our doom, in future worlds to live,
And part no more. When ruthless death shall close
Thy fading eyes, that moment ends my woes!

Ella non sà se non in van dolersi,
Chiamar fortuna e 'l cielo empio e crudele.
Perche, ahi lassa! dicea, non mi sommersi
Quando levai ne l'Ocean le vele?
Zerbin, che i languidi occhi ha in lei conversi,
Sente più doglia ch' ella si querele,
Che de la passion tenace e forte
Che l'ha condotto omai vicino a morte.

Cosi, cor mio, vogliate (le diceva)
Dapoi ch'io sarò morto, amarmi ancora,
Como solo il lasciarvi è che m'aggreva,
Quì senza guida, et non già perch' io mora;
Che se in secura parte m'accadeva
Finir de la mia vita l' ultima ora,
Lieto e contento e fortunato a pieno
Morto sarei, poi ch' io vi moro in seno.

Or, should I still survive that stroke of grief,
At least thy sword will yield a sure relief.
And, ah! I trust, relieved from mortal state,
Each breathless corse will meet a milder fate;
When some, in pity of our hapless doom,
May close our bodies in one peaceful tomb."

Thus she; and while his throbbing pulse she feels,
Weak and more weak, as death relentless steals
Each vital sense, with her sad lip she drains
The last faint breath of life that yet remains.

To raise his feeble voice Zerbino tried—
" I charge thee now, O loved in death! (he cried,)
By that affection which thy bosom bore,
When, for my sake, thou left'st thy father's shore,
And, if a truth like mine such power can give,
While Heaven shall please, I now command thee, live;
But never be it from thy thoughts removed,
That, much as man can love, Zerbino loved.

. . . . . .

A questo la mestissima Isabella
Declinando la faccia lacrimosa,
E congiungendo la sua bocca a quella
Di Zerbin, languidetta come rosa,
Rosa non colta in sua stagion, si ch' ella
Impallidisca in sù la siepe ombrosa,
Disse, non vi pensate già, mia vita,
Far senza me quest' ultima partita.

. . . . . .

Zerbin, la debil voce rinforzando,
Disse: io vi prego e supplico, mia diva,
Per quello amor che mi mostraste, quando
Per me lasciaste la paterna riva;

Fear not but God, in time, will succour lend,
From every ill thy virtue to defend;
As once he sent the Roman knight, to save
Thy youth, unfriended, from the robber's cave;
As from the seas he drew thee safe to land,
And snatch'd thee from th' impure Biscayner's hand.
And when, at last, all other hopes we lose,
Be death the last sad refuge that we choose."

Thus spoke the dying knight: but scarce were heard
His latter words, in accents weak preferr'd.
Here ended life.

The death of Isabel herself is related in the twenty-first canto, in a manner infinitely touching. But Ariosto, less than any author, requires illustration by fragments or translations, since he is so generally known; and those who have not yet read him, cannot possibly, from the translation of a few stanzas, form any idea of the grace which pervades the whole poem, where the style, the enchanting language, and the nature of the ornaments, are in perfect harmony with the subject.

E se comandar posso, io vel comando,
Che fin che piace a Dio restiate viva:
Ne mai per caso poniate in oblio
Che quanto amar si può v' abbia amato io.
. . . . . .
Non credo che quest' ultime parole
Potesse esprimer sì che fosse inteso;
E finì come il debil lume suole
Cui cera manchi od altro in che sia acceso.

Canto 24. st. 76, &c.

The glory of Ariosto is attached to his Orlando Furioso; but this is not his only work which remains to us. He wrote five comedies, of five acts each, and in verse, which are not now performed, and are scarcely read, since they no longer accord with the manners of the present day. Of these five, the two first were originally written in prose, in his early youth. Ariosto proposed to himself Plautus and Terence, as models; and as they had copied the Greek drama, so he imitated the Latin. We find, in his pieces, all the characters of the Roman comedy: the slaves, the parasites, nurses, and female adventurers. The scene of the first, *La Cassaria,* is laid at Mitylene, in an island of Greece, where the poet might suppose the manners to be such as would harmonize with his fable. But the second, *I Suppositi,* is laid at Ferrara; and the plot is artfully connected with the taking of Otranto by the Turks, on the twenty-first of August, 1480; which gives a date to the action, and a locality to the scene. Nor can we avoid remarking the singular contrast between ancient manners and a modern subject. Still, the plot of the comedy is novel and engaging; and there is an interest and even a sensibility in the part of the father. There is, too, sometimes, a gaiety, though rather forced than natural. The wit is rather Italian than Roman. The pleasantries of the slaves and parasites of Ariosto

recall to mind too strongly the same personages in Plautus and Terence, and erudition often usurps the place of humour. The scene, after the manner of the Latin comedies, is laid in the street before the house of the principal personage. It never varies; and the unity of time is as rigorously observed as that of place; but, as on the Roman stage, the action is more related than seen. The author seems afraid of placing before the eyes of the spectators, situations of passion, and the language of the heart. In one piece, in which love and paternal affection are the two leading subjects, there is not a single scene between the lover and his mistress, nor between the father and the son; and the incident that produces the catastrophe, passes in the interior of the house, at a distance from the eyes of the audience. Every thing in these pieces reminds us of the Roman theatre. They are ingeniously, though coldly, wrought. Every thing is imitated, even to the bad taste of the pleasantries, which are not sallies of wit, as with our modern harlequins, but coarse classical jokes. We may observe, in the comedies of Ariosto, a powerful talent, corrupted by servile imitation; and in perusing them, we perceive the reason why the Italians, relying always on the ancient models, and never consulting their native genius, were so late in excelling in the dramatic art. *La Calandra,*

of Bernardo Dovizio, afterwards Cardinal Bibbiena, who disputes with Ariosto the merit of introducing Italian comedy, has all the same defects, and the same classical imitation, with more vulgarity and less wit. The subject is that of the *Menechmi,* so often produced on the theatres; but, in *La Calandra,* the twins, who are confounded with one another, are a brother and sister.

Ariosto was the first to perceive, that the Italian language did not possess a versification adapted for comedy. Like Dovizio, he wrote his two first pieces in prose; and, at the end of twenty years, turned them into *versi sdruccioli,* for the theatre at Ferrara.

The *versi sdruccioli* are formed of twelve syllables. The accent is laid on the antepenultimate, and the two last are not accented. But these pretended verses are not rhymed, and so many breaks are permitted, that a word is often divided, as in the word *continua-mente,* so that the four first syllables terminate the first verse, whilst the two following commence the second verse. They are, in short, devoid of all harmony and poetic charm, and their monotony renders the reading of these comedies tedious.

Ariosto composed many sonnets, madrigals, and canzoni. They possess less harmony than the poetry of Petrarch, but more nature. His

elegies, entitled *Capitoli Amorosi*, in *terza rima*, will bear comparison with the most touching passages in Ovid, Tibullus, and Propertius. Love, however, appears there under the romantic form; and Ariosto, though a rival of the ancients, is not, here, their imitator. He more frequently celebrates the joys than the pains of love. What we gather from his own poems, respecting himself, does not represent him as a melancholy or a sentimental man. Lastly, he composed several satires, which serve to elucidate his character, and the various events of his life. These are, strictly speaking, epistles, in verse, addressed to his friends, and which did not appear until after his death. We do not find in these, either the vigour or the asperity of the Roman satire. On the contrary, we remain persuaded, in reading them, that Ariosto was an amiable man, impatient only of the misfortunes which he suffered, of the errors of those who surrounded him, and, above all, of the prosaic spirit of the Cardinal d'Este, who was incapable of appreciating his merits. We perceive that he was much occupied with himself; and that his health, his comfort, and his diet, held more place in his thoughts than we might have expected in one who sang of knights-errant; who assigns to his heroes a couch in the forest, without any other covering than the heavens, or any other food than the roots of the earth; and

who, in the long adventures, through which he leads them, seems to forget that they are subject to all the natural wants of life.*

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* I cannot, I think, close a chapter, devoted to Ariosto, in a more appropriate manner, than by exhibiting him as characterized by the first of our living poets, M. Delille, who thus describes him in his poem *Sur l'Imagination.*

L'Arioste naquit ; autour de son berceau,
Tous ces légers esprits, sujets brillans des fées,
Sur un char de saphirs, des plumes pour trophées,
Leurs cercles, leurs anneaux et leur baguette en main,
Au son de la guitare, au bruit du tambourin,
Accoururent en foule, et fêtant sa naissance,
De combats et d'amour bercèrent son enfance.
Un prisme pour hochet, sous mille aspects divers,
Et sous mille couleurs, lui montra l'Univers.
Raison, gaîté, folie, en lui tout est extrême ;
Il se rit de son art, du lecteur, de lui-même,
Fait naître un sentiment qu'il étouffe soudain ;
D'un récit commencé rompt le fil dans ma main,
Le renoue aussitôt, part, s'élève, s'abaisse.
Ainsi, d'un vol agile essayant la souplesse,
Cent fois l'oiseau volage interrompt son essor,
S'élève, redescend, et se relève encor,
S'abat sur une fleur, se pose sur un chêne ;
L'heureux lecteur se livre au charme qui l'entraîne ;
Ce n'est plus qu'un enfant qui se plaît aux récits
De géans, de combats, de fantômes, d'esprits,
Qui, dans le même instant, désire, espère, tremble,
S'irrite ou s'attendrit, pleure et rit tout ensemble.

NOTE.

We cannot refuse ourselves the pleasure of giving the whole of the very picturesque and animated description, alluded to in page 45, of the preceding chapter, in addition to the stanzas cited by M. Sismondi; availing ourselves of an excellent translation, to be met with in the Rev. W. Parr Greswell's *Memoirs of Politiano;* a work abounding in classic elegance and research, not unworthy of the great scholars whom it commemorates. In many of his translations, the author has very happily caught the easy and polished style peculiar to Politiano, and to a very few other poets of the Medicean age. This beautiful episode opens with the following line:

" Ma fatto amor la sua bella vendetta," &c.

Now, in his proud revenge exulting high,
Through fields of air, Love speeds his rapid flight,
And in his mother's realms, the treacherous boy
Rejoins his kindred band of flutterers light;
That realm, of each bewitching grace the joy,
Where Beauty wreaths with sweets her tresses bright,
Where Zephyr importunes, on wanton wing,
Flora's coy charms, and aids her flowers to spring.

Thine, Erato! to Love's a kindred name!
Of Love's domains instruct the bard to tell;
To thee, chaste Muse! alone 't is given to claim
Free ingress there, secure from every spell:
Thou rul'st of soft amours the vocal frame,
And Cupid, oft, as childish thoughts impel
To thrill with wanton touch its golden strings,
Behind his winged back his quiver flings.

A mount o'erlooks the charming Cyprian Isle,
Whence, towards the morn's first blush, the eye sublime
Might reach the sevenfold course of mighty Nile;
But ne'er may mortal foot that prospect climb;
A verdant hill o'erhangs its highest pile,
Whose base, a plain, that laughs in vernal prime;
Where gentlest airs, midst flowers and herbage gay,
Urge o'er the quivering blade their wanton way.

A wall of gold secures the utmost bound,
And, dark with viewless shade, a woody vale;
There, on each branch, with youthful foliage crown'd,
Some feather'd songster chaunts his amorous tale;
And join'd, in murmurs soft, with grateful sound,
Two rivulets glide pellucid through the dale;
Beside whose streams, this sweet, that bitter found,
His shafts of gold, Love tempers for the wound.

No flow'rets here decline their wither'd heads,
Blanch'd with cold snows, or fringed with hoar-frost sere;
No Winter, wide, his icy mantle spreads;
No tender scion rends the tempest drear.
Here Spring eternal smiles; nor varying leads
His change quadruple, the revolving year:
Spring with a thousand blooms her brows entwined,
Her auburn locks light fluttering in the wind.

The inferior band of Loves, a childish throng,
Tyrants of none, save hearts of vulgar kind,
Each other gibing with loquacious tongue,
On stridulous stones their barbed arrows grind:
Whilst Pranks and Wiles, the rivulet's marge along,
Ply at the whirling wheel, their task assign'd;
And on the sparkling stone, in copious dews,
Vain Hopes and vain Desires the lymph effuse.

There pleasing Pain and flattering fond Delight,
Sweet broils, caresses sweet, together go;
Sorrows, that hang their heads in doleful plight,
And swell with tears the bitter streamlet's flow;
Paleness all wan, and dreaming still of slight,
Affection fond, with Leanness, Fear, and Woe;
Suspicion, casting round his peering eye,
And o'er the midway, dancing, wanton Joy.

Pleasure with Beauty gambols; light in air,
Bliss soars inconstant; Anguish sullen sits;
Blind Error flutters, bat-like, here and there;
And Frenzy raves, and strikes his thigh by fits;
Repentance, of past folly late aware,
Her fruitless penance there ne'er intermits;
Her hand with gore fell Cruelty distains,
And seeks Despair in death to end his pains.

Gestures and nods, that inmost thoughts impart,
Illusions silent, smiles that guile intend,
The glance, the look, that speak th' impassion'd heart,
Mid flow'ry haunts, for youth their toils suspend:
And never from his griefs Complaint apart,
Prone on his palm his face is seen to bend;
Now hence—now thence—in unrestrained guise,
Licentiousness on wing capricious flies.

Such ministers thy progeny attend,
Venus! fair mother of each fluttering power:
A thousand odours from those fields ascend,
While Zephyr brings in dews the pearly-shower;
Fann'd by his flight, what time their incense blend
The lily, violet, rose, or other flower;
And views, with conscious pride, the exulting scene,
Its mingled azure, vermil, pale and green.

The trembling pansy virgin fears alarm;
Downward, her modest eye she blushing bends:
The laughing rose, more specious, bold, and warm,
Her ardent bosom ne'er from Sol defends:
Here, from the capsule bursts each opening charm,
Full-blown, th' invited hand she here attends;
Here, she, who late with fires delightful glow'd,
Droops languid, with her hues the mead bestrew'd.

In showers descending, courts th' enamoured air
The violet's yellow, purple, snowy hues;
Hyacinth! thy woes, thy bosom's marks declare;
His form Narcissus in the stream yet views;
In snowy vest, but fringed with purple glare,
Pale Clylia still the parting sun pursues;
Fresh o'er Adonis, Venus pours her woes;
Acanthus smiles; her lovers Crocus shows.

To these, we shall beg leave to add a translation of a little irregular piece, entitled "Le Montanine," very pleasingly rendered, by the same pen, from the Italian of Politiano:

Vaghe le Montanine e pastorelle,
Donde venite si leggiadre e belle?

Maids of these hills, so fair and gay,
Say whence you come, and whither stray?

From yonder heights: our lowly shed,
Those clumps that rise so green, disclose;
There, by our simple parents bred,
We share their blessing and repose;
Now, evening from the flowery close,
Recalls, where late our flocks we fed.

Ah, tell me, in what region grew
  Such fruits, transcending all compare?
Methinks, I Love's own offspring view,
  Such graces deck your shape and air;
  Nor gold, nor diamonds, glitter there,
Mean your attire, but angels you.

Yet well such beauties might repine
  'Mid desert hills and vales to bloom;
What scenes, where pride and splendour shine,
  Would not your brighter charms become!
  But say,—with this your alpine home,
Can ye, content, such bliss resign?

Far happier, we, our fleecy care
  Trip lightly after to the mead,
Than, pent in city walls, your fair,
  Foot the gay dance in silks array'd:
  Nor wish have we, save who should braid
With gayest wreaths her flowing hair.

In the same author's Rape of Europa, we likewise meet with abundance of poetical imagery, of which, we shall content ourselves with subjoining the following, as an example:

Beneath a snow-white bull's majestic guise,
  Here Jove, conceal'd by love's transforming power,
Exulting bears his peerless, blooming prize:
  With wild affright she views the parting shore;
Her golden locks, the winds that adverse rise,
  In loose disorder spread her bosom o'er;
Light floats her vest, by the same gales upborne:
One hand the chine, one grasps the circling horn.

Her naked feet, as of the waves afraid,
With shrinking effort, seem to avoid the main;
Terror and grief in every act—for aid
Her cries invoke the fair attendant train:
They, seated distant on the flow'ry mead,
Frantic, recall their mistress loved, in vain—
Return, Europa; far resounds the cry:
On sails the God, intent on amorous joy.

CHAPTER XIII.

Alamanni.—Bernardo Tasso.—Trissino.—Tasso.

Ariosto did not assume to himself the honours of the epic muse. But, without designing to soar beyond the romantic epic, which was invented before his time, he carried it to the highest point of perfection. The glory which he reaped, excited the emulation of the numerous poets who then crowded Italy; and many of them, despising the reputation which they might have derived from the lighter compositions of the lyric muse, from bucolics or didactic poems, were ambitious of distinguishing themselves by a loftier and more enduring flight. Each of the fabulous Paladins of the court of Charlemagne had his poet, in the sixteenth century; and the Knights of the Round Table of King Arthur were all celebrated in turn. Two of these romances, in octave stanzas, the *Girone il cortese* of Luigi Alamanni, and the *Amadis* of Bernardo Tasso, have survived the shipwreck of the rest. The first is a work carefully composed by one of the most learned men of his time,

who had a talent for versification, and was not devoid of taste. But we feel sensible that he had too laboriously and coldly studied the requisites for his undertaking; and we may imagine that we see him in his room, intent on his work, and thus musing to himself: "Let us commence with a brilliant invocation, in the manner of Virgil; a bold simile will next be required; a degree of familiarity must follow, to explain our style, and to prove that we are not suitors to the loftier Muse alone. After that, we may allow our imagination to expatiate: here, an incoherent image, which will shew that we are carried away by our feelings; there, a pastoral scene; for variety suits the poetry of romance." Luigi Alamanni has, indeed very well executed what he so pedantically proposed to himself; but his *Girone il cortese*, which is deficient neither in harmony of versification, nor in variety of incident, is a tedious production, and cannot, throughout, boast a line of inspiration.

Alamanni was born at Florence, in 1495. His family was attached to the party of the Medici; but, when he saw the sovereign authority of his country usurped by that house, and tyrannically administered by the Cardinal Julian, he separated himself from his early connexions, and, in conjunction with his intimate friend Macchiavelli, entered into a conspiracy against the Medici, in 1522. The conspiracy was detected, and

Alamanni had the good fortune to escape. An exile from his country, he wandered through different cities of Lombardy and France, for the space of five years. He was recalled, and invested with magisterial functions, during the short-lived triumph of the republican party; but only to be proscribed afresh three years afterwards, when Florence submitted to Alessandro de' Medici. From that period, he lived in France, attached to the service of Francis I., and was employed by him and by his son Henry II. in a diplomatic career, for which his judgment and acuteness of mind more eminently qualified him, than for the cultivation of poetry. He died in 1556. He has left us a poem on agriculture, in *versi sciolti*, or blank verse, in six books, containing about six thousand verses, entitled *La Coltivazione*. This poem has preserved a considerable reputation, from the great purity and elegance of the style, as well as from the methodical arrangement and the sagacity of its agricultural precepts; but, although he has the art of expressing himself poetically on such a subject, the work is, notwithstanding, tedious. An agriculturist would rather choose a well-written treatise in prose, and a votary of the Muse would prefer a more animating theme.*

* I shall select from *La Coltivazione*, a specimen of the versification of Alamanni, rather than from his chivalric poems,

Alamànni was also the author of an epic poem, called *L'Avarchide;* a fanciful travesty of the

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which are now almost forgotten. He thus describes the process of engrafting.

Ma che direm de l' ingegnoso inserto,
Che in si gran maraviglia al mondo mostra
Quel che val l' arte che a natura segua?
Questo, vedendo una ben nata pianta
D' agresti abitator' talvolta preda,
Gli ancide e spegne, e di dolcezza ornata
Nuova e bella colonia in essa adduce:
Nè si sdegna ella, ma guardando in giro,
Si bella scolge l' adottiva prole,
Che, i veri figli suoi posti in obblio,
Lieta e piena d' amor gli altrui nutrisce.
L'arte e l' ingegno quì mille maniere
Maravigliosamente ha poste in pruova.
Quando è più dolce il ciel, chi prende in alto
Le somme cime più novelle e verdi
Del miglior frutto, e risecando il ramo
D' un altro, per se allor aspro e selvaggio,
Ma giovine e robusto, o 'l tronco istesso,
Adatta in modo le due scorze insieme,
Che l' uno e l' altro umor, che d' essi saglia,
Mischiando le virtù, faccia indivisi
Il sapor e l' odor, le frondi e i pomi.
Chi la gemma svegliendo, a l' altra pianta
Fa simil piaga, e per soave impiastro,
Ben congiunta ed egual l' inchiude in essa.
Chi de la scorza intera spoglia un ramo,
In guisa di pastor ch' al nuovo tempo,
Faccia zampogne a risonar le valli,
E ne riveste un altro in forma tale
Che qual gonna nativa il cinga e copra.

Iliad of Homer, in romantic verse. The scene is transferred to Bruges, the ancient *Avarcum;* the besiegers are knights of King Arthur; and the events are similar to those of the Iliad, and are related, book by book, in the same order.

Bernardo Tasso, who commenced writing his Amadis about the year 1545, and published it in 1559, forty years after the appearance of the Orlando Furioso, was a gentleman of Bergamo, attached, from the year 1531, to the service of Ferdinando San Severino, prince of Salerno, and established by him at Sorrento, where he remained until the year 1547. At that epoch, San Severino, who had opposed himself to the introduction of the Inquisition into Naples, was driven into revolt, and compelled to embrace the party of France. Bernardo Tasso shared his misfortunes, and lost, through his fidelity, the situation which he had held at Naples. He then attached himself to the court of Urbino, and afterwards to that of Mantua, at which latter city he died, on the fourth of September, 1569. It was during his residence at Sorrento, that his son, the illustrious Tasso, was born, on the eleventh of March, 1544; of whom we shall shortly speak, and whom the Neapolitans claim as their countryman, although his father was of Bergamo.

Pulci, Boiardo, and Ariosto, had transplanted into Italian poetry, the chivalrous romances of the court of Charlemagne, which we have before

placed in the third class. Alamanni had versified those of the first, or of the court of King Arthur. Bernardo Tasso devoted himself to the second, and composed a poem, of one hundred cantos, on the Amadis of Gaul, a romance equally claimed by the Spaniards and by the French. This romance is distinguished from others by a loftier enthusiasm of love, by richer imagination, and by a greater exaltation of all the chivalrous virtues; although it is somewhat less engaging, and exhibits less of the marvellous in valour and exploits. It is from the expression of the warmer feelings of the South, rather than from historic proof, that we can confirm the claims of the Spaniards to the first invention of the Amadis; and it was probable, therefore, that it would appear to more advantage in a language of the South, than in the romances of the French. The first loves of the Damoisel de la Mer, yet a stranger to his origin, and of the tender and timid Oriana; the constant favour of the good fairy Urganda, extended to all distressed lovers; and the noble qualities of Amadis, who, without knowing Perion, king of the Gauls, delivers him from a thousand dangers, and appears on all occasions, in forests and in castles, as the redresser of wrongs, and the avenger of injuries, might furnish, for a poem, a subject full of charm, interest, and action. In such a poem, imagination

should have less sway than sensibility; and the poet should not permit himself to trifle with the interest of the narrative, which ought to exercise dominion over the heart. But Bernardo Tasso was far from possessing, in the same degree as his son, or even as the original author whose narrative he translated, a meditative and poetic character. He does not, it is true, like Ariosto, sport with his subject and his readers. He is grave and serious; nor is any sally of wit or pleasantry permitted in his recital. But we are displeased to find that, like Ariosto, he interrupts his narrative a hundred times, and abandons his heroes at the most critical moment, whenever he has excited our interest in their favour. We feel, in reading him, that he has prescribed these interruptions to himself, in the way of art. They occur more frequently than in Ariosto; and in this manner he entirely destroys the interest which could alone give success to his work. The style is agreeable, but not engaging, and in general more ornamented than poetic. The author, at regular distances, has placed similes and metaphors, or other figures of speech, with which we are sure to meet again, after a certain number of verses, and which appear at stated intervals, as boundaries to mark his poetic route. The dramatic part is neglected, and the speeches have not the native charm of the original Amadis. All these faults render so

long a work fatiguing to the reader; and Bernardo Tasso would probably have been forgotten, if the fame of his son had not preserved his memory.*

If we find a spirit of pedantry introducing itself into the poetry of Romance, we may naturally suppose, that those poets, who formed themselves on the classic model, would be equally pedantic. Giovanni Giorgio Trissino, born at Vicenza, on the eighth of July, 1478, was ambitious of giving to his country an epic poem, where no other imi-

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* One of the very few poetical passages we meet with, in the productions of Bernardo Tasso, is, perhaps, to be found in the description given by the fairy Urganda to Oriana, of the birth and early adventures of her Amadis. *Canto* vi. *Stanza* 33, &c.

We are informed how Perion, the King of the Gauls, wandering through his kingdom in search of chivalric adventures, obtained the affections of the King of Brittany's daughter, and was compelled to leave her, when about to become a mother, in order to continue his career. We are then told the manner in which this princess, with the assistance of her friend Darioletta, fearful of detection, consents to expose her infant to the waves, in a little bark floating on the river near the palace, where the Naiads flew to its protection.

Uscir le Dive, e dal liquido regno
Uscendo a gara, di rose e di fiori
Spogliando i prati lor, cinsero il legno,
Come si suol le chiome a vincitori.
Mostrar le sponde d' allegrezza segno,
E i vaghi augei, con garruli rumori,
Facean, battendo l' ali, compagnia
Al fanciul che felice se ne gia.

tation should be perceptible than such as was derived from an ardent study of the ancients. He devoted twenty years to this work, which he began to publish in the year 1547. He chose for his subject, the deliverance of Italy from the Goths, and Belisarius for his hero. It was impossible to have entered on so great a task, with a higher reputation than Trissino possessed. His extensive knowledge, and his poetic genius, were respected by pontiffs and by princes. The subject was noble, and of national interest; the names already illustrious and popular; and the choice which he had made of blank verse, afforded him more freedom of thought, and an indulgence in a more elevated style. But these circumstances

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Non fur si tosto al mar, ch' alto e sonante
Prima era, che tornò piano e quieto,
Come ora che Nettuno trionfante
Va per lo regno suo tranquillo e lieto;
Corsero tutti i Dei, corsero quante
Ninfe quel fondo avea cupo e segreto;
E presa la cassetta, accommiataro
I Dei del fiume che l' accompagnaro.

Non fù alcuna di lor che non porgesse
L'umida mano a sostenere il legno;
Non fù alcuna di lor che nol cingesse
Delle ricchezze del suo salso regno;
Non fù alcuna di lor che non avesse
Gioia e pietà del fanciulletto degno;
Così per l' onda allor placida e pura
Lo conducea con ogni studio e cura.

served only to render his failure more remarkable. The *versi sciolti* are admirably adapted to tragedy, where the language differs only from prose in being more dignified and more harmonious; but they are far removed from the ease and majesty of the Latin hexameter, and become tedious and prosaic in a narrative, already, in its subject, too closely approximating to history. Trissino had not the art of elevating himself by dignity of expression, or by harmony of language, and, still less, by the majesty of the subject; for, by an ill-conceived imitation of the ancients, he brings before his readers the most trite and trivial circumstances. Homer, indeed, follows his heroes through all the details of life. But these details possess always, in their simplicity, a dignity peculiar to the heroic age; whilst the court of Byzantium presents only the contrast of the insignificance of the men, and the solemnity of the ceremonials. Trissino describes to us the toilet of Justinian. He relates how the emperor puts on a succession of pompous robes, with which the monarchs of the East are loaded; but, in overwhelming us with a torrent of words, he does not even succeed in this idle description of ceremony. He never forgets the hour of repast; and his heroes deliberate, with solemn dulness, whether they should resume their duties before or after dinner. Notwithstanding all this labour, he does not even describe the military feasts, or the manners of the

age, with any degree of interest.* In the second book, he details, with fatiguing erudition, in the first place, the geography and statistics of the empire, and, afterwards, the formation of the

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* Cosi quei ch' eran stati entr' al consiglio
Rinchiusi alquanto, lieti se n' andaro
A prender cibo ne i diletti alberghi.
L' ordinator delle città del mondo
Come fù dentro all' onorata stanza,
Spogliossi il ricco manto, e chiamar fece
Il buon Narsete, e l'buon conte d'Isaura;
E disse ad ambi lor queste parole:
Cari e prudenti miei mastri di guerra,
Non vi sia grave andare insieme al campo,
Ed ordinar le genti in quella piaggia
Grande che va dalla marina al vallo:
Che dopo pranzo vo' venirvi anch' io
Per dar principio alla futura impresa.
Udito questo i dui baroni eletti
Si dipartiro, e scesi entr' al cortile,
Disse Narsete al buon conte d'Isaura:
Che vogliam fare, il mio onorato padre?
Volemo andare al nostro alloggiamento
A prender cibo, e poi dopo 'l mangiare
Girsene al campo ad ordinar le schiere?
A cui rispose il vecchio Paulo e disse:
O buon figliuol del generoso Araspol
Il tempo ch' insta è si fugace e corto
Ch' a noi non ci bisogna perdern' oncia:
Andiamo al campo, che sarem sul fatto;
E quivi eseguirem questi negozi,
E poscia ciberensi, benche è meglio
Senza cibo restar che senza onore.

legions. But all is in the style of a gazette, without relieving the multitude of verses by the least interest or poetry, and without even affording instruction in the room of pleasure. We constantly perceive, that, amidst all his display of knowledge, he confounds both time and manners. In his mythology, fantastically composed of paganism and christianity, in which he invokes Apollo and the Muses to interest themselves in the triumph of the faith, we find the attributes of the Deity in conversation with each other. The poverty of his style, which his gravity makes still more repulsive, the bad taste in which his characters discourse, and the extreme tediousness of the principal action, render this work, so long anxiously expected, so celebrated before its birth, and so distinguished by name even at the present day, one of the worst poems that has ever appeared in any language.

But, whilst men of the first reputation in Italy failed in the gigantic enterprise of producing an epic poem, a young man, of twenty one years of age, scarcely known by a romantic poem called *Rinaldo*, commenced writing, at the court of Ferrara, whither he had been lately invited, that *Jerusalem delivered*, which has placed its author by the side of Homer and of Virgil, and has elevated him, perhaps, above all modern poets. Torquato Tasso, whose misfortunes equalled his glory, devoted sixteen years to the composition of this poem, of which seven editions appeared in the

same year, 1581, almost all without the concurrence of the author.

The merit of Tasso consists in having chosen the most engaging subject that could have inspired a modern poet. History presents us with the remarkable fact of a mighty contest, between the people who were destined to exalt the human race to its highest pitch of civilization, and those who would have reduced it to the most degrading barbarism. This was the struggle between the Christians and Saracens, during the wars of the crusades. It is not to be denied that, at the time the Latins first commenced these wars, the Saracens were greatly superior in letters, in arts, and in manners, to the Christians who attacked them. But they had already passed the meridian of their glory; and the defects of their religion and their government, and the barbarism of the Turks, were rapidly drawing them to the degrading state, in which we behold them at the present day. At the same time, the crusaders, in spite of their ferocity, ignorance, and superstition, possessed the germs of civilization. Their force of thought and sentiment was about to develope that improvement which began with the Latins in the eleventh century, and which has rendered Europe so far superior to the rest of the world. If the crusaders had succeeded in their sanguinary contest with the people of the East, Asia would have received our laws, our manners, and our customs; and would have been at this day a flourishing country,

inhabited by a free and noble race. The arts, for which she is formed by nature, would there have attained that perfection which was known to the Greeks, and which was found in the brilliant and favoured cities of Seleucia and Antioch. The borders of the Jordan would now have been cultivated by a happy people; and the lofty walls of Jerusalem would not have stood isolated, in the midst of desert sands and rocks barren of verdure. The fruitful plains of Syria, and the delicious valleys of Lebanon, would have been the abode of peace and enjoyment, or the theatre of the most brilliant actions. The overbearing Turk, the ferocious Druse, or the savage Bedouin, would not have oppressed the wretched descendants of the most ancient people of the earth. If the Mahomedans, on the contrary, had accomplished their projects of conquest; if the invasion of Europe, commenced at the same time in the East, in the West, and in the South, had succeeded, the energies of the human mind would have been extinguished by despotism, and none of the qualities, which characterize the European, would have developed themselves. He would have been cowardly, ignorant, and perfidious, like the Greek, the Syrian, and the Fellah of Egypt; and his country, less favoured by nature, would have been buried amidst dark forests, or inundated by marshy waters, like the deserted districts of Romagna. The contest was termi-

nated, without victory declaring for either power. The Mahomedans and the Franks still exist, the subjects of mutual comparison; and the latter may acknowledge, after the lapse of seven centuries, their debt of gratitude to the valour of their ruder ancestors.

These two races of men, when they combated, seven centuries ago, could not foresee the important consequences which Providence attached to their efforts. But a motive, not less noble, not less disinterested, and still more poetical, directed their arms. A religious faith connected their salvation with their valour. The Saracens considered themselves called on to subjugate the earth to the faith of Mahomet; the Christians, to enfranchise the sacred spot where their divine founder suffered death and the mysteries of redemption were accomplished. We are not bound theologically to inquire whether the crusades were conformable to the spirit of Christianity. Were a Council of Clermont held in the present day, the voice of the combatants would not invocate God alone, but, honour, their country, and humanity. But the religion of that age was wholly warlike; and it was a profound, disinterested, and enthusiastic sentiment which led our ancestors to bid adieu to their wives and children, to traverse unknown seas, and to brave a thousand deaths in a foreign land. This sentiment was highly poetical. Self-devotion

and confidence in heaven, form heroes; and accordingly we never, at any period, beheld so brilliant a display of valour. Superstition arose out of the very circumstances of the times. Those who wholly devoted themselves to the service of God, might expect that God would interfere in their favour, and on this interference they reposed.—

"Eh! quel temps fut jamais plus fertile en miracles?"

The whole history of the crusades, indeed, abounds with miracles. The assistance of God was invoked before battle, his arm was visible in their deliverance, his rod chastised them in defeat; and marvels were so very prevalent, that the supernatural seemed to usurp the laws of nature and the common course of events. The Mahomedans, on their side, relied also on Divine protection. They invoked, in their mosques, with no less confidence, the great defender of their faith; and they attributed to his favour, or to his anger, their victories and their disasters. The prodigies which each party boasted to have seen performed in their behalf, were not denied by their enemies; but, as each believed themselves worshippers of the true God, so each attributed to the power of evil spirits the occasional success of their opponents. The faith against which the crusaders fought, appeared to them the worship of the powers of

hell. They easily believed that a contest might exist between invisible beings, as between different nations on earth; and, when Tasso armed the dark powers of enchantment against the Christian knights, he only developed and embellished a popular idea, for the adoption of which our education, our prejudices, and all our ancient traditions have prepared us.

The scene of the *Jerusalem delivered*, so rich in recollections, and so brilliant from its associations with all our religious feelings, is one in which nature displays her richest treasures, and where descriptions, in their turn the most lovely and the most austere, attract the pen of the poet. The enchanting gardens of Eden, and the sands of the Desert, are approximated. All the animals which man has brought under his dominion, and all those that wage war against him; all the plants which adorn his domains, and all that are found in the wilderness, belong to the varied soil of Asia, to that poetical land, where every object seems created to form a picture. On the other hand, the nations of Christendom send forth their warriors to the army of the Cross. The whole world is here the patrimony of the poet. He even calls on the remote Iceland, separated from the rest of the world, *La divisa dal mondo ultima Islanda:* on Norway, who sends her King Gernando, and on Greece, who furnishes only two hundred knights, for a war in which her own existence is at stake.

At the same time, all the people of Asia and Africa, united by a common cause, contribute to the defence of Jerusalem, forces differing in manners, in dress, and in language. We may confidently assert, that however high an interest the taking of Troy might possess for the Greeks, the first result of their combined efforts, and the first victory which they had gained over the people of Asia; and whatever interest the vanity of the Romans had attached to the adventures of Æneas, whom their poetic fables led the Romans to adopt as their progenitor; neither the Iliad nor the Æneid possess the dignity of subject, the interest, at the same time, divine and human, and the varied and dramatic action, which are peculiar to the *Jerusalem delivered.*

On first opening the poem of Tasso, we are struck with the magnificence of the subject. He lays it all before our eyes in the first stanza:

> Th' illustrious Chief who warred for Heaven, I sing,
> And drove from Jesus' tomb th' insulting King.
> Great were the deeds his arms, his wisdom wrought;
> With many a toil the glorious prize he bought:
> In vain did Hell in hateful league combine
> With rebel man, to thwart the great design;
> In vain the harness'd youth from Afric's coasts
> Join'd their proud arms with Asia's warlike hosts;
> Heaven smiled; and bade the wand'ring bands obey
> The sacred ensigns of his lofty sway.*

* [The extracts are taken from Mr. Hunt's spirited translation.—*Tr.*]

The whole course of the poem is truly epic. It is entire, simple, and grand; and ends, as it commenced, with dignity. Tasso does not undertake the whole history of the first crusade, but enters on his action when the war had already begun. His whole poem is comprised in the campaign of 1099, and in a space of time which, according to history, consists of no more than forty days. This was the fifth year after the preaching of the crusades, which began in 1095, and the third after the Latins passed into Asia, which happened in the month of May, 1097. In that year, they had taken Nicea, and commenced the siege of Antioch. That city, which had resisted their arms for nine months, surrendered only in July, 1098. The Christians, exhausted by their struggles against the countless armies of their enemies, by a long famine, followed by pestilence, and discouraged and enfeebled still more by dissensions, had retired into their cantonments. But in the spring of the following year, they assembled afresh in the plains of Tortosa. They commenced their march to Jerusalem, and arriving before that city, at the beginning of July, took it, after a siege of eight days, on the fifteenth of July, 1099. They defended it against the Sultan of Egypt, whom they defeated at Ascalon, on the fourteenth of August following, and thus founded the kingdom of Jerusalem, where Godfrey of Boulogne ruled only for a year.

The poem of Tasso opens in the plain of Tortosa. The Deity himself calls the crusaders to arms. One of his angels appears to the pious Godfrey of Boulogne, reproaches the Christians with supineness, promises him victory, and announces to him the decrees of God, who has elected him leader of the sacred host. Godfrey instantly assembles his companions in arms. By his eloquence, he imparts to them the divine enthusiasm which animates his own breast, and a sudden inspiration determines the other warriors to choose him for their leader. He orders the army to prepare to march for Jerusalem, and is desirous of seeing it re-united on the field. This review, which acquaints us with the most important persons of the poem, is a homage rendered to all the nations of the West, who flocked to this great enterprise, and a poetical monument raised to the fame of those heroes, whose glory is still reflected on their latest descendants. Tasso seizes the opportunity of exhibiting, in the Christian army, the ancestors of the princes whose protection he had experienced; but, above all, Guelfo IV. Duke of Bavaria, son of the Marquis d'Este, Alberto Azzo II., who died in Cyprus, on his return from the Holy Land, and Rinaldo, an imaginary hero, from whom Tasso has derived the family of Este, Dukes of Ferrara and Modena, in whose court he lived. We also meet with the generous Tancred, cousin of the celebrated

Robert Guiscard, who had just achieved the conquest of the Two Sicilies; Raymond de Saint-Gilles, Count of Toulouse, the Nestor of the army; and a crowd of chiefs, whom the poet has invested with great interest of character.

On the other side, the Emir, lieutenant of the Sultan of Egypt, whom Tasso has named Aladin, King of Jerusalem, prepares himself for defence. He is aided by the sorcerer Ismeno, who, in order to frustrate the attack of the Christians, wished to employ, in his profane art, a miraculous image of the Virgin, which was preserved in the temple. This image disappeared in the night. A priest of the temple, or, perhaps, a celestial power, had saved it from profanation. Sophronia, a young Christian of Jerusalem, accuses herself of having stolen the image from the Saracens, in order to divert the anger of the king from her people. The love of Olindo for Sophronia, who wishes, in his turn, to sacrifice himself for her; the cruelty of Aladin, who condemns them both to death; and the generosity of Clorinda, who saves them from the stake, form one of the most touching episodes of the *Jerusalem delivered.* This episode was translated by J. J. Rousseau; and is, from that circumstance, better known to the French nation, than any other parts of the poem. This is a happy mode of introducing Clorinda, the heroine of the infidel army, to the reader. Her generosity is, thus, with great judgment, made known to us before

her valour; otherwise, this fierce Amazon, whom we always find in the midst of blood and combats, might have revolted our feelings. Tasso, in his character of Clorinda, has imitated Ariosto. He has borrowed from his Bradamante or his Marfisa; but heroines assimilate better with the chivalrous romance than with the epic, where probability is a more necessary quality. This character is, in fact, misplaced, in describing the manners of the East, where a woman was never known to appear in arms or in the field. We more than once feel, in reading Tasso, that he has drawn his ideas of chivalry too frequently from Ariosto, and from the celebrated romances of his time. Hence arises, sometimes, a mixture of the two styles. Tasso ought not to have attempted to rival Ariosto, in the indulgence of a brilliant and romantic fancy, since his success here would have been a fault. But, however improbable his Clorinda appears, it is in her character that his greatest beauties are displayed. In the same canto, Argante, the bravest of the infidel heroes, appears also for the first time. He is sent on an embassy to the Christian camp, and he there manifests the fierce, impetuous, and ungovernable character which he is destined to support throughout the poem.

At the opening of the third canto, as soon as morning dawns on the warriors, they commence

their march with ardour, in the hopes of reaching the end of their pilgrimage.

The eager bands, unconscious of their speed,
With winged feet, and winged hearts, proceed.
But when the Sun, now high advancing, hurl'd
His noon-tide flood of radiance o'er the world,
Lo! on their sight Jerusalem arose!
The sacred towers each pointing finger shows;
Jerusalem was heard from ev'ry tongue,
Jerusalem a thousand voices rung.
Thus, some bold mariners, a hardy band,
Whose venturous search explores a distant land,
And braving dubious seas, and unknown skies,
The faithless winds and treacherous billows tries;
When first the wish'd-for shore salutes their eye,
Bursts from their lips at once the jóyful cry;
Each shows the welcome soil, and pleased at last,
Forgets his weary way, and dangers past.*

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* Ali ha ciascuno al core, ed ali al piede,
Ne del suo ratto andar però s'accorge;
Ma quando il sol gli aridi campi fiede
Con raggi assai ferventi, e in alto sorge,
Ecco! apparir Gierusalem si vede
Ecco! additar Gierusalem si scorge,
Ecco! da mille voci unitamente
Gierusalemme salutar si sente.
Così di naviganti audace stuolo
Che mova a ricercar estranio lido;
E in mar dubbioso, e sotto ignoto polo,
Provi l'onde fallaci e 'l vento infido,

To this first transport of joy, a deep contrition soon succeeds, which is naturally excited in the devout pilgrims, by the sight of a city which their God chose for his residence; where he died, and was buried, and rose from the dead.

> With naked feet they press'd the rugged road;
> Their glorious Chief the meek example show'd;
> All pomp of dress, each vesture's gaudy fold,
> With silken drapery gay, or rich with gold,
> Quick they strip off, and ev'ry helm divest
> Of painted plumage, and of nodding crest:
> Alike they quit their heart's proud guise, and pour
> Of penitential tears a pious shower.

As soon as Aladin discovers the approach of the Christians, he sends out the flower of his army to prevent their nearer approach to Jerusalem. He himself ascends a tower, which commands an extensive view of the country, to see the armies defile. He is accompanied by Erminia, daughter of the Sultan of Antioch, whose father and whose brother had perished the preceding year by the Christian sword; but who, notwithstanding, knew not how to steel her heart against the bravest and the noblest of the Crusaders. Aladin interrogates her as to the names and the country of the knights whom he observes to distinguish

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> S' al fin discopre il disiato suolo,
> Lo saluta da lunge in lieto grido:
> E l' uno à l' altro 'l mostra, e in tanto obblia
> La noia e 'l mal de la passata via.
>
> *Canto* iii. *st.* 3. 4.

themselves most highly by their valour. Tancred is the first; and in recognizing him, a sigh escapes from the bosom of Erminia, and her eyes are bathed in tears. Tancred himself, insensible to the love of Erminia, which he has not even remarked, is enamoured of Clorinda, with whom he unknowingly combats. With a blow of his spear, he strikes off her helmet.

> The thongs that braced her helm, asunder flew;
> With naked head, she stood exposed to view;
> Loose to the wind her golden tresses stream'd;
> And 'mid the storm of war the Sun of beauty beam'd.
> Flash'd her bright eyes with anger, stern and wild,
> Yet lovely still; how lovely had she smiled!

Tancred, thenceforth, defends himself no longer against the fair Amazon. Whilst she presses on him with her sword, he urges his suit; but a crowd of routed Saracens separate them from each other.

From the commencement of the poem, the most tender sentiments are thus combined with the action; and in the *Jerusalem delivered*, a nobler part has been assigned to love, than has been given to it in any other epic poem. This part is conformable to what is required from the epic romance, which is more elevated in its nature, more religious, and, consequently, more in unison with the softer passion. Love, enthusiastic, respectful, and full of homage, was an essential character of chivalry. It was the source of the noblest actions, and gave inspiration to all the poetry of the age. If Achilles had been represented in the Iliad as

enamoured, he could not have forgotten his power, and the woman whom he loved must have submitted to his authority. This prejudice of ancient Greece must have given to his passion a character of barbarism, which instead of exalting, abases, the hero. But Tancred's flame is ennobled by the religion which he professes, and he becomes more amiable, without any sacrifice of his valour. With the heroes of the classical epic, love is a weakness; with the Christian knights, a devotion. The character of Tasso, who was himself possessed of an enthusiastic imagination, and of a heart open to all romantic impressions, led him to the natural expression of a tender and delicate sentiment.

The powers of darkness could not behold without grief, the approaching triumph of the Christian arms. In the fourth canto of his poem, Tasso introduces us to their councils. Satan, wishing to resist the conquests of the Crusaders, assembles his sable bands.

Th' infernal trump, that loud and hoarsely bray'd,
Convened the inmates of th' eternal shade:
Hell's gloomy caverns shook at every pore;
The murky air return'd the sullen roar:
Not half so loud, from upper regions driven,
Bursts on th' affrighted world the bolt of Heaven;
Nor such the shock, when from Earth's womb profound,
Exploding vapours rive the solid ground.*

* This stanza has been universally admired, as much for the effect of its imitative harmony, as for the beauty of its images.

Chiama gli abitator dell' ombre eterne
Il rauco suon della Tartarea tromba;

The employment of infernal spirits in combating the decrees of Heaven, presented many difficulties to Tasso. Superstition, by whose hand they were drawn, had given to them a semblance mean and ridiculous. Although Satan had resisted an all-powerful Being, we do not find him invested with grandeur or majesty. It is difficult to represent him, without exciting distaste or ridicule; and, in spite of the character which some Christian poets have drawn of him, Satan is seldom considered as a dignified being. Tasso has combated this difficulty; and his portrait of the savage ruler of Hell, whom he calls Pluto, inspires terror rather than disgust.

On his fierce brow majestic terror rode,
That swell'd with conscious pride th' infernal God:
His reddening eye, whence streaming poison ran,
Glared like a comet, threatening woe to man.
Thick matted folds his ample beard display'd,
And veil'd his bosom in its mighty shade.
His mouth was like the whirlpool of the flood,
Dark, yawning, deep, and foul with grumous blood.*

Treman le spaziose atre caverne,
E l' aer cieco a quel romor rimbomba.
Nè sì stridendo mai, dalle superne
Regioni del cielo il folgor piomba,
Nè sì scossa giammai trema la terra,
Quando i vapori in sen gravida serra.

Canto iv. *st.* 3.

* Orrida maestà nel fero aspetto
Terrore accresce, e più superbo il rende,
Rosseggian gli occhi, e di veneno infetto
Come infausta cometa il guardo splende;

But we soon perceive that this powerful picture is almost revolting to us; and still more so, when we find, in the next stanza, that he appeals to another sense, that of the smell, an allusion to which is not permitted in poetry. The speech which Satan addresses to the infernal spirits, is the prototype of that sombre eloquence assigned to him by Milton. The hatred which fires him, and which permits him, in his fall, to consider only the means of revenge, is sufficiently exalted, to ennoble his character. The demons, obedient to his voice, immediately separate, and take their flight to different regions of the earth, air, and water, to unite against the Christian army all the power which they exercise over the elements, and all which they have acquired over the men who devote themselves to their worship. The Sultan of Damascus, the most renowned among the magicians of the East, at the instigation of his evil

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Gl' involve il mento, e sù l' irsuto petto
Hispida e folta la gran barba scende;
E in guisa di voragine profonda
S'apre la bocca, d'atro sangue immonda.
Quali i fumi sulfurei ed infiammati
Escon di Mongibello, e il puzzo, e 'l tuono;
Tal della fiera bocca i negri fiati,
Tale il fetore e le favelle sono.
Mentre ei parlava, Cerbero i latrati
Ripresse, e l' Idra si fè muta al suono:
Restò Cocito, e ne tremar gli abissi,
E in questi detti il gran rimbombo udissi.

Canto iv. *st.* 7. 8.

genius, undertakes to seduce the Christian knights, by the charms of his niece, the sorceress Armida. The East had conceded to her the palm of beauty. In artifice, address, and the most subtle intrigues of a woman or a sorceress, she was equally skilled. Armida, confident in her charms, repairs alone to the camp of the Christians. She hopes to draw into the snares of love, the most valiant of the foes of her country; and, perhaps, the illustrious Godfrey himself. It is in this portrait of Armida, in the description of all that is lovely, tender, and voluptuous, that Tasso has surpassed himself and is inimitable. The poets of antiquity appear not to have felt so intensely the power of beauty; nor, like Tasso, have they ever expressed the intoxication of love.* Armida, amidst a crowd of knights, desires to be conducted to the pious commander. She throws herself at his feet, and claims his protection; she relates that her uncle had despoiled her of her inheritance; she feigns that he had attempted to poison her; she represents herself as a fugitive and an outlaw; and invests herself with imaginary dangers, in order to excite the sympathy of Godfrey and of the knights who surround him. She concludes by imploring him to grant her a small band of Christian soldiers to reconduct her to Damascus, of which place, her partisans had promised to open to her, one of the gates. Godfrey's constancy is at first shaken;

* *Canto* iv. *st.* 28 to 32.

but, after hesitating, he courteously declines diverting the army from the service of God, for an object of human interest. The knights, whom the tears of Armida had softened, and who are smitten by her beauty, condemn the cold prudence of their chief. Eustace, the brother of Godfrey, and the most ardent admirer of Armida, speaks, in the name of all the others, with that courage and chivalrous frankness, which render the period of the Crusades an epoch, more favourable than any other, for poetry. He reminds them of the obligation of all true knights to protect the feeble and the oppressed, and above all, the weaker sex.

"Heavens! be it ne'er in France's land surmised,
Nor any land where courtesy is prized,
That in so fair a cause aloof we stood,
Shrunk from fatigue, or fear'd to risk our blood.
For me, henceforth I cast with shame aside
My glittering corslet, and my helmet's pride,
For ever I ungird my trusty brand;
No more shall arms be wielded by this hand;
Farewell, my steed, our proud career is o'er;
And thou, fair knighthood, be usurp'd no more." *

Godfrey, moved by the entreaties of his brother, and carried away by the wishes of the

* Ah non sia ver per Dio, che si ridica
In Francia, ò dove in pregio è cortesia,
Che si fugga da noi rischio ò fatica
Per cagion così giusta e così pia;

whole army, consents, at length, that ten knights shall accompany Armida, to restore her to the throne of her ancestors. The sorceress, after having obtained her suit, attempts to increase the number of her devotees, by seducing, in her return, more than Godfrey had conceded to her; and the intrigues of her art are described with a delicacy and a grace which we should, perhaps, look for in vain in the erotic poets, and, at the same time, with a dignity which renders this picture worthy of the epic muse.

We have now analyzed the first four cantos of the *Jerusalem delivered*. The action is already commenced; the most important personages have been introduced; the resources of the enemy are developed; the designs of the infernal powers are announced; and we perceive the obstacles to the progress of the Christians. Yet the poet has not paused in his flight, in order to acquaint us with preceding events. The action advances; and the occurrences, anterior to the opening of the poem, are recalled incidentally, and as occasion presents itself, without suspending for them the course of the narrative. A long recital sets forth anterior occurrences in the Odyssey, and in the Æneid; but the Iliad, which has evidently served

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Io per me quì depongo elmo e lorica,
Quì mi scingo la spada, e più non fia
Ch' adopri indegnamente arme e destriero,
O 'l nome usurpi mai di cavaliero.

Canto iv. *st.* 81.

for a model to Tasso, is marked by an uninterrupted progress, like the *Jerusalem delivered*, without reference to past events. Almost all the other epic poets have imitated Virgil, either in order to render the developement more easy, or to give, by a long discourse, a more dramatic form to the narrative. Vasco de Gama, Adam, Telemachus, and Henry IV., have each an important recital assigned to them, which occupies the second and third books of the Lusiad, of Paradise Lost, of the Telemachus, and the Henriade. Several of the Italian critics have made it a cause of serious reproach to Tasso, that he has not conformed to the model of the great masters; but they ought rather to have felt the difference between mere imitation, and the observance of particular rules. These rules prescribe nothing. They interdict only what is contrary to the general effect, to emotion, and to the sentiment of the beautiful. This feeling is checked, and the mind of the reader remains in doubt, if the persons, for whom we wish to interest him, are unknown to him; and if he be unacquainted with the time and the events, into the midst of which we wish to transport him. But the manner of accomplishing this is not governed by the laws of poetry. On the contrary, we ought to feel indebted to the poet, if he effects it in a novel mode, and if, disdaining the example of his predecessors, he does not model his poem, like a work of manufacture, by a common pat-

tern. But, in Tasso, we find no difficulty in comprehending this rule, or in following it. He does not require from his readers an acquaintance with the events preceding those of his poem. He is complete and satisfactory, and supports himself unaided. This merit he owes, in great part, to the extreme care which he took to instruct himself in the truth of the incidents, and to ascertain, in all their details, the true situation of the places where the scene of his poem is laid. When M. de Châteaubriand read this poem, before the walls of Jerusalem, he was struck with the fidelity of the description, which seems reserved for ocular demonstration. The description of the city of Jerusalem is drawn, he assures us, with the most scrupulous accuracy.* The forest, situated six miles distant from the camp, on the side of Arabia, and in which Ismeno prepares his dark enchantments, still remains. It is the only one found in the neighbourhood of the city, and it was from thence that the Crusaders procured all the materials for their engines of war. We even remark the tower, where Aladin is represented as sitting with Ermiñia; and we retrace the paths by which Armida arrived, Erminia fled, and Clorinda advanced to the combat. This scrupulous accuracy gives a new value to the poem of Tasso. It connects, more intimately, history and fiction;

* *Canto* iii. *st.* 55. 57.

and the first Crusade is inseparably united with the name of the poet who has celebrated it.

In his review of the army of the Crusaders, Tasso has fixed our attention on a band of adventurers, the flower of the Christian chivalry. The chief of this band, Dudone di Consa, had been slain by Argante, in the first action, under the walls of Jerusalem. It was, consequently, requisite to appoint a new leader to this band of knights, the hope of the army. Eustace, who wished to prevent Rinaldo from following Armida, points him out as the most deserving of this distinction, and endeavours to rouse his ambition. Gernando, son of the king of Norway, lays claim to it, and is enraged to find a competitor. He spreads injurious reports against Rinaldo. Rinaldo hears and resents them. The two knights rush on each other, in spite of the crowd of warriors who endeavour to separate them, and Gernando is killed in the combat. The manners and the laws of knighthood required, that an impeachment of a soldier's honour should be avenged by the sword. But, on the other hand, all dissensions amongst the Crusaders ought to have been suspended; and he who had dedicated his sword to God, ought no longer to have employed it in his own cause. Rinaldo, therefore, in order to avoid a military trial, was compelled to quit the Christian camp. During these occurrences, Armida carries with her, not only the ten

knights conceded to her by Godfrey, but many others besides, who, in the first night after her departure, had deserted the camp to follow her; and, whilst the army is enfeebled by the absence of so many warriors, it is thrown into alarm by the loss of its convoys, and by the approach of the Egyptian fleet.

The sixth canto opens with two extraordinary combats, to which the Circassian, Argante, challenges the Christians in presence of the whole army. The one is with Otho, who remains his prisoner; the other, with Tancred. Night alone interrupts the second combat. The two warriors are alike wounded; and Erminia, called on to give to Argante those attentions which, in the chivalrous ages, the females bestowed on the wounded, whose only physicians they were, regrets not having sooner succoured the hero whom she loves, to whom she is bound in gratitude, and who stands in need of her healing hand. She resolves, at length, to join him in the Christian camp. United in strict friendship with Clorinda, she avails herself of her intimacy to array herself in her armour, and passes through the city gates in her name. The whole passage, where her delicate form is represented as with difficulty supporting the weight of her armour, is written with an inexpressible charm.

> With the rude steel's ungrateful load she prest
> Her golden hair, soft neck, and swelling breast;

Her arm, unequal to a task so great,
Gives way beneath the buckler's massy weight;
Glittering in burnish'd steel the damsel stood,
Her sex, her nature, and herself subdued.
Love stood delighted by; the wanton child
Eyed the mask'd Beauty, and in mischief smiled:
'Twas thus he smiled, when Hercules of yore
Resigned his manhood, and the distaff bore.
Scarce can her limbs the unequal weight sustain;
Her feet move slowly, and she steps with pain;
She leans, confiding, on her faithful maid,
Who walks before, and lends her useful aid:
But from inspiring hope new spirits rise,
And love fresh vigour to her limbs supplies.
She urges on; the spot they reach with speed
Where waits the Squire; they mount the ready steed.*

As soon as she has escaped from the city, she despatches her knight to inform Tancred, and

* Col durissimo acciar preme ed offende
Il delicato collo e l'aurea chioma:
E la tenera man lo scudo prende
Pur troppo grave e insopportabil soma:
Così tutta di ferro intorno splende,
E in atto militar se stessa doma;
Gode amor ch'è presente, e tra se ride
Come all 'hor già che avvolse in gonna Alcide.
O con quanta fatica ella sostiene
L' inegual peso, e move lenti i passi,
Ed à la fide compagnia, s'attiene
Che per appoggio andar dinanzi fassi;
Ma rinforzan gli spirti amore e spene,
E ministran vigore ai membri lassi:
Sì che giungono al loco ove la aspetta
Lo scudiero, e in arcion sagliono in fretta.
Canto vi. *st.* 92. 93.

ask for her, a protection to the Latin camp. During this interval, and to calm her impatience, she advances to a neighbouring height, whence she views the tents so endeared to her.

Still Night, in star-embroider'd vest array'd,
Cast o'er the slumb'ring world her silent shade;
No fleeting cloud disturb'd her tranquil reign;
The moon, slow rising through the azure plain,
O'er lawn and hill her silver lustre threw,
And changed to living pearls the orbed dew.
In passion's mazes lost, th' enamour'd Dame
Gave pensive utt'rance to her ill-starr'd flame,
Bade the mute plains her secret sorrows know,
And call'd on silence to attest her woe.
Then gazing on the distant Camp, she cries:
"Ye Latin tents, fair are ye in my eyes!
The passing gales that from ye blow, impart
A transient comfort to my bleeding heart!
So may relenting Heaven reserve for me,
Mild in its wrath, a kinder destiny,
As 'tis in you alone my woes must cease;
As in the midst of arms I look for peace.
Receive me then! and grant me there to prove
The pity, promised by assuring Love;
That soothing pity which I found before,
A captive, from the hero I adore.
Nor one vain wish I cherish, to regain
My kingly honours and my rich domain;
All earthly glories freely I resign;
Far other wish, far other hopes are mine!
Though stripp'd of these, abundant bliss 'twould give
Within your loved abode, a slave to live!"
Ah! little, while she spake, the Fair divined
Th' unkindly lot her frowning fates design'd!

As on the height she stood, with quiv'ring play,
Danced on her polish'd arms the lunar ray;
The steel, the snowy vest that deck'd her frame,
Wide o'er the fields reflect the silv'ry flame;
The burnish'd tiger, blazing on her crest,
Clorinda's self, in pomp of war, confest.*

Not far from thence is posted an advanced guard of the Christians, commanded by two brothers, Alcandro and Polypherno. The last, imagining he sees Clorinda, rushes forward to attack her. The supposed warrior flies; and Tancred, informed that Clorinda has been seen in the camp, flatters himself that the message he has received comes from her, and, wounded as he is, follows in the pursuit, to watch over her safety.

Erminia, after flying the whole day, reaches a solitary valley, watered by the Jordan, which the noise of arms had never reached. She is there received by an aged shepherd, who, with his three sons, tends his flock, in the bosom of peace and innocence. It is impossible to draw a more enchanting and touching picture of pastoral life, than this, in which Erminia resolves to wait for happier days.† Tancred, on his part, misled by the pursuit, arrives at the castle of Armida, where, by treachery, he is made prisoner. He does not appear, on the day appointed, to renew with Argante the combat which night had interrupted; and the flower of the army have forsaken

* *Canto* vi. *st.* 104, &c. † *Canto* vii, *st.* 1 to 22.

the camp, in the train of Armida. In the mean time, the venerable Raymond, Count of Toulouse, supplies the place of Tancred; and Tasso gives interest to this part of the poem, in confronting an aged soldier with the most renowned and most ferocious of the Saracens, and in giving him the advantage, by means of celestial aid. This single combat is terminated, as in the Iliad, by an arrow despatched from the Asiatic camp against the Christian warrior. In the engagement which follows, the Latins are defeated. The eighth canto represents them in still greater peril. The arms of Rinaldo, stained with blood, are brought to the Christian camp, and many circumstances lead to the belief that he has been assassinated by his comrades. Alecto directs the suspicions against Godfrey himself. The Italians, long jealous of the French, seize their arms to avenge their hero. A dreadful sedition spreads through the camp, and seems to threaten a civil commotion. This scene, as well as the dignified calmness of Godfrey, who recalls the revolted troops to their duty, is painted with the hand of a master.

The situation of the Christians now becomes every day more critical. Soliman, Sultan of Nicea, having been driven from his kingdom by the arms of the Christians, at the commencement of the war, had fled to the Sultan of Cairo, and had been commissioned by him to call to arms the Arabs of the desert. He arrives, in the

ninth canto, on the night after the tumult. An innumerable host of Bedouins follows him. Under the cover of night, they attack the camp of the Crusaders, and spread dismay and confusion; whilst Argante and Clorinda make a sortie, and attack the camp on the other side. The Saracens are led on by all the rebellious spirits of hell; but God does not permit these malignant powers to bestow victory on his enemies. He despatches the archangel Michael to discomfit them, and, after the supernatural powers have retired from the field of battle, the Christians recover the day by their own valour. Soliman is compelled to fly. The sorcerer Ismeno stops him on his route. By means of his magic art, he conducts him back to Jerusalem, concealed from the eyes of his enemies; and, at the same time, predicts to him the future conquests of the Mahomedans, and the glory of Saladin, whom he represents as descending from Soliman. He introduces him to the councils of Aladin, at the moment when the chiefs are preparing to capitulate; and Soliman, by his presence, restores the courage of the dispirited warriors. On the other part, the knights whom Armida had seduced, return to the camp during the battle. They relate to Godfrey the manner in which they had been made prisoners by that sorceress; how they had experienced the power of her enchantments; and how she had

endeavoured to send them prisoners to the King of Egypt, when Rinaldo, whom they met by the way, delivered them, and Tancred amongst them. Thus the alarm which had spread through the Christian camp, for the safety of Rinaldo, is dissipated, and Peter, the holy hermit, reveals the high destinies which Heaven reserves for his descendants.

The eleventh canto opens with the religious pomp and litanies, with which the Christians invoke the aid of Heaven, during their procession to the Mount of Olives. It is thus that they prepare themselves to assault the city on the following day. The opening of this great day is announced with all that military enthusiasm, which the Italian poets so well know how to represent. The assault and the manner of combat are here described with great truth of costume; and, although Tasso, like all other poets, gives much more consequence to the personal valour of the chiefs, and less to the services of the soldiers than is really due, his description is, yet, that of a real action, and not of a combat of knights-errant. In the midst of the assault, Godfrey of Boulogne, Guelfo of Bavaria, and Raymond of Toulouse, are wounded; and their retreat discourages their soldiers. Argante and Soliman make a furious sortie from the gates of Jerusalem, disperse the Christians, and attempt to fire the wooden tower, on

which the warriors were placed for the assault. Tancred and Godfrey, whose wounds had been dressed, resist them, and night separates the combatants.

Clorinda, meanwhile, who had not taken an active part in the battle, wishes to distinguish herself, in the night, by another exploit. She meditates a sortie, in order to burn the wooden tower, which still remained at some distance from the walls. Argante begs to accompany her. The heroine, to avoid being recognized, clothes herself in black armour. The aged slave who accompanies her, and who had known her from her infancy, reveals to her secrets, respecting her birth, before unknown to her. He informs her that she is the daughter of the Queen of Ethiopia; that she is under the protection of Saint George, and that this sainted warrior had often reproached him, in dreams, for not having baptized her. Clorinda, although troubled herself by similar dreams, still persists in her design. The two valiant champions penetrate the Christian lines, and fire the tower; but, as they retire, overwhelmed by numbers, Argante enters Jerusalem by the golden gate, while Clorinda is led off in pursuit of an assailant, and finds on her return the barriers closed against her. She then seeks to escape from the field, in the obscurity of night. Tancred pursues her, and, when they have reached a solitary spot, he challenges the unknown war-

rior to single combat, deeming him not unworthy of his sword. This combat between two lovers, who do not recognize each other under the shades of night, is the masterpiece of Tasso. The combat itself is painted with matchless force of colouring.* But, when Clorinda is mortally wounded by her lover, the pathetic attains its greatest height, and poetry has nothing to offer more affecting.

But lo! the fated moment now was come,
The moment, charter'd with Clorinda's doom:
Great Tancred's sword her beauteous bosom tore;
Deep lodg'd the greedy blade, and drank her virgin gore:
Her robe, of golden tissue, that represt
Th' ambitious heavings of her snowy breast,
With the warm stream was fill'd; cold death assail'd
Her bloodless frame; her languid footsteps fail'd:
Tancred with threats the falling fair pursues,
His conquest urges, and his blow renews.
She raises, as she falls, her voice of woe,
And from her lips life's latest accents flow,
Th' infusion of the Spirit from on high,
Spirit of Faith, of Hope, of Charity! †

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* *Canto* xii. *st.* 53 to 63.

† Ma ecco omai l' ora fatale è giunta
Che 'l viver di Clorinda al suo fin deve;
Spinge egli il ferro nel bel sen di punta,
Che vi s' immerge, e 'l sangue avido beve.
E la vesta che d' or vago trapunta
Le mammelle stringea tenera e leve,
L' empie d' un caldo fiume; ella già sente
Morirsi, e 'l piè le manca egro e languente.

New virtue, by th' Almighty Father given;
For, if in life she spurn'd the laws of Heaven,
He will'd at least, that in her dying hour,
Her contrite soul should own her Saviour's power.
"Friend, I am conquer'd; thou hast pardon free;
And pardon I demand in death from thee;
Not on this frame, which no base fear can know,
But on my parting spirit mercy show:
'Tis for my sinful soul I bid thee pray;
Let rites baptismal wash my guilt away."
From her pale lips these languid words that fell,
Such sweetness breathed, divine, ineffable,
As to the hero's heart resistless crept;
His enmity was hush'd, his anger slept,
And straight, compell'd by some mysterious force,
Unbidden tears gush'd copious from their source.
Emerging from the hill, a scanty brook,
Not far remote, its murm'ring progress took:

Quel segue la vittoria, e la trafitta
Vergine minacciando incalza e preme.
Ella, mentre cadea, la voce afflitta
Movendo, disse le parole estreme.
Parole ch' a lei novo un spirto ditta,
Spirto di fè, di carità, di speme:
Virtù, ch' or Dio le infonde, e se rubella
In vita fù, la vuole in morte ancella.

Amico, hai vinto, io ti perdon, perdona
Tu ancora, al corpo nò, che nulla pave,
A l' alma sì. Deh, per lei prega, e dona
Battesmo a me, ch' ogni mia colpa lave.
In queste voci languide, risuona
Un non sò chè di flebile e soave,
Ch' al cor gli serpe, ed ogni sdegno ammorza,
E gli occhi a lagrimar gli invoglia e sforza.

Thither the soul-struck warrior ran, to fill
His hollow helmet at the limpid rill,
Then hasten'd to perform the sad demand;
Some conscious instinct shook his trembling hand,
As from her face, till now unknown, he drew
The helm that cover'd it; he saw, he knew:—
All power of speech, of motion, then was gone;
Ah! cruel sight! ah! knowledge, best unknown!
Nor yet he died; in that momentous hour,
Collecting all the remnant of his power,
Deep in his soul his sorrows he supprest,
And for the solemn office arm'd his breast,
That she, whom late his murd'rous steel had slain,
By water's saving power might live again.
As, from his tongue, Salvation's accents came,
New joy transform'd the virgin's dying frame;
A smile of gladness o'er her features past,
And sweetly tranquil, as she breathed her last,

Poco quindi lontan, nel sen del monte
Scaturia mormorando un picciol rio;
Egli v' accorse, e l' elmo empie nel fonte
E tornò mesto al grande uffizio e pio.
Tremar senti la man, mentre la fronte
Non conosciuta ancor sciolse e scoprio.
La vidde, e la conobbe, e restò senza
E voce e moto. Ahi vista! ahi conoscenza!

Non morì già, che sue virtuti accolse
Tutte in quel punto, e in guardia al cor le mise;
E premendo il suo affanno, a darsi volse
Vita, con l' acqua, a chi col ferro uccise.
Mentre egli il suon de sacri detti sciolse,
Colei di gioia trasmutossi e rise,
E in atto di morir lieto e vivace
Dir parea: S' apre il cielo; io vado in pace.

She seem'd to say, " Earth's vain delusions cease ;
" Heaven opens on my eyes ; I part in peace."
O'er her fair face death's livid hue arose ;
So, mix'd with violets, the lily shows.
She fix'd her eyes on Heaven ; the sun, the sky,
Seem'd to look down in pity from on high :
She waved her hand, and since her lips denied
All power of speech, the pledge of peace supplied.
So pass'd from earthly scenes the maid forgiven ;
So her pure spirit fled, redeem'd, to Heaven ;
Not death's rude hand her features fair impress'd,
But the calm slumber of unclouded rest.

The despair of Tancred is such as must be excited by so dreadful an incident. But Tasso, true to the sensibility of his nation, which never prolongs excessive grief, and faithful, perhaps, to the genuine rules of poetry, which ought never to convert into real suffering the pleasures of the imagination, does not allow the reader to dwell on this melancholy catastrophe; and, before quitting Tancred, administers to him consolation, by a dream.

D'un bel pallor hà il bianco volto asperso,
Come a gigli sarian miste viole,
E gli occhi al cielo affisa, e in lei converso
Sembra per la pietate il cielo e 'l sole.
E la man fredda e nuda alzando verso
Il cavaliero, in vece di parole
Gli dà pegno di pace. In questa forma
Passa la bella donna e par che dorma.

Canto xii. *st.* 64 to 69.

CHAPTER XIV.

Remarks on Tasso concluded.

SYMPATHY is, perhaps, the origin of all the pleasures of the mind, and if critics have prescribed other laws and rules of art for appreciating and judging the beautiful, the rest of the world are, nevertheless, governed by their own feelings. A passage which excites a deep interest or awakens our curiosity, which circulates our blood more rapidly, and checks our respiration, which takes possession of our whole heart, and whose fictions wear the semblance of reality, has fully attained the object of its author, and has accomplished the highest effort of art. If, too, the writer of such a fiction has succeeded in exciting so lively an emotion, without giving pain to the reader, without having recourse to pictures of suffering, rather than to moral sentiments, the recollection of such a work is as delightful and as pure as the first impression is powerful. The poetic invention is a subject of admiration to us, after the emotion is calmed; and we return, with pleasure, to indulge a second and a third time, a feeling of the mind which is vehement without being pain-

ful. This merit, which gives a charm to romance, and constitutes the excellence of tragedy, is frequently wanting in the epic. We admire the most celebrated poems; but our admiration is not accompanied by any powerful emotion, by an ardent curiosity to pursue the course of events, or by a very lively interest for the actors. The epic is, therefore, amongst the noble fictions of poetry, that which draws the fewest tears. Tasso, in this respect, has shewn himself superior to all his rivals. The romantic interest of Tancred and Clorinda is carried quite as far as in the love romances, whose only object was to awaken the softer feelings of the heart. In the character of Tancred, the bravest, the most generous, and the most loyal of knights, we trace a vein of modesty and melancholy which wins all hearts. Clorinda, in spite of the contrast between her invincible and savage valour, and the mild virtues of the female character, attracts us by her generosity. The catastrophe is the most affecting that any writer of romance has ever invented, or any tragic author has brought on the stage. Although Tasso deprives the generous Tancred, almost in the middle of the poem, of all hope and all object in life, he does not yet destroy the interest of what ensues. The shade of Clorinda seems to attach itself henceforth to this unhappy hero, who never again appears on the scene, without exciting the deepest sympathy in the reader.

The moving tower, with which the Christians had attacked the walls, had been burnt by the united efforts of Clorinda and Argante. Ismeno, to prevent the Christians constructing a new one, by means of his horrid enchantments, places under the guard of demons, the only forest where they could find wood proper for machines of war. The terrors which these dreaded places inspire are thus communicated to the reader:

Then burst upon their ears a sudden sound;
As when an earthquake rocks the groaning ground;
As when the South-winds murmur, loud and deep;
As when amid the rocks the billows weep;
The serpent's hiss was there, the wolf's dread howl,
The lion's roar, the bear's terrific growl,
The trumpet's blast, with crashing thunder join'd;
Such mingled sounds in one the hideous din combined. *

The most valiant warriors, in vain, successively endeavour to penetrate into this forest, which is surrounded by walls of fire. Tancred alone succeeds; but this hero, a stranger to fear, is overcome by compassion. The tree which he

* Esce allor della selva un suon repente,
Che par rimbombo di terren che treme;
E 'l mormorar degli Austri in lui si sente,
E 'l pianto d' onda che fra scogli geme.
Come rugge il leon, fischia il serpente,
Come urla il lupo, e come l' orso freme
V' odi, e v' odi le trombe, e v' odi il tuono;
Tanti e sì fatti suoni esprime un suono.

Canto xiii. *st.* 21.

attempts to hew down with his sword, pours forth blood from the wounds which he has inflicted. The voice of Clorinda is heard, and reproaches him with violating the last repose of the dead. She informs him, that the souls of the warriors, who have fallen before Jerusalem, are attached to the trees of this forest, as to a new body, for a certain number of years. Tancred, scarcely trusting his senses, suspects that what he hears is the voice of a sorcerer, and not that of Clorinda. But the uncertainty alone disarms him, and he relents and departs.

The burning days of the dog-star now appear; the sun pours his scorching rays on the sands of the desert; and the army, deprived of water, and choaked with the heat and the dust, faint under the drought. The picture of this dreadful scourge is drawn with a fidelity which no other poet has equalled.

Whene'er the Sun begins his matin race,
Vapours of bloody hue distain his face
And his bright orb surround, a sure presage
Of coming day's intolerable rage.
Spotted with red, his parting disk he shows,
Unerring token of to-morrow's woes,*

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* Non esce il sol giamai ch' asperso e cinto
Di sanguigni vapori entro ed intorno,
Non mostri ne la fronte assai distinto
Mesto presagio d' infelice giorno;

And with the future mischief he portends,
To past distress a sting more poignant lends.
While thus he reigns, the despot of the skies,
Where'er unhappy man directs his eyes,
He sees the flow'rs all droop, the leaves grow pale,
The verdure wither, and the herbage fail.
Cleft is the ground; the streams, absorb'd, are dry;
All Nature's works confess th' inclement sky.
The barren clouds, through air's wide regions spread,
Part into flaky streaks, and flare with red.
The Heavens above like one vast furnace glow,
Nor aught relieves the eye of man below.
Within their caves the silent Zephyrs slept;
The stagnant air unbroken stillness kept;
No wind was there, or 'twas the burning blast
That o'er parch'd Afric's glowing sands had past,
And with a dull and heavy heat oppress'd
The fever'd cheek, dry throat, and lab'ring breast.

Non parte mai, che 'n rosse macchie tinto,
Non minacci egual noia al suo ritorno;
E non inasprì i già sofferti danni
Con certa tema di futuri affanni.

Mentre gli raggi poi d' alto diffonde,
Quanto d' intorno occhio mortal si gira,
Seccarsi i fiori, e impallidir le fronde,
Assetate languir l' erbe rimira,
E fendersi la terra, e scemar l' onde,
Ogni cosa del ciel soggetta a l' ira;
E le sterili nubi in aria sparse,
In sembianza di fiamme altrui mostrarse.

Sembra il ciel ne l'aspetto atra fornace,
Nè cosa appar che gli occhi almen ristaure;
Ne le spelonche sue zefiro tace,
E 'n tutto è fermo il vaneggiar de l' aure;

The entire passage is too long for translation, but there is not a single verse in these eleven stanzas, which is not admirable, which does not contribute to the heightening of the picture, and afford a proof of that profound knowledge of nature, without which a great poet cannot be formed; for, without it, the enchantments of imagination lose their probability. The prayers of Godfrey obtain at length, from heaven, the rain so ardently desired by the army, which restores health and life to man and to the animal and vegetable creations. But the enchantments of the forest can be destroyed only by Rinaldo. It is he whom God has chosen as the champion destined to conquer Jerusalem; and Heaven inclines the heart of Godfrey to pardon him, and that of Guelfo to demand his forgiveness.

The importance given by Tasso to the enchantments of the forest, to the power of Ismeno, to that of the Christian magician, and, in general, to all the marvellous and supernatural part of the *Jerusalem delivered*, are treated by Voltaire, in his Essay on Epic Poetry, with a mixture of bitter irony and contempt. But Voltaire, who, in this essay, has proved that genius is independent

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Solo vi soffia (e par vampa di face)
Vento, che move da l' arene maure,
Che gravoso e spiacente, e seno e gote
Co' densi fiati ad or ad or percote.

Canto xiii. *st.* 54.

of the idle rules of the critics, and that the varying taste of nations gives birth to original beauties, to be rightly appreciated only by themselves, ceases to be just and impartial, as soon as superstition is mentioned. He is then no longer a poet or a critic, but the champion only of the philosophy of his age. He drags to the tribunal of reason, or tries by his sceptic prejudices, every belief which he has not himself adopted; as if it were a question of the abstract truth of poetry, and not of its truth in relation to the hero, the poet, and his readers. Enchantments and incantations are true, with respect to the period of the crusades, when they formed the universal belief. Indeed, the miracles of the monks, and the illusions of demons, are presented to us as historic facts. Although a philosopher might smile at a knight of the twelfth century yielding belief to spirits and magicians, yet an historian would with more reason be ridiculed, who should describe the same knight as professing the opinions of a modern sceptic. We cannot, without depriving history of all interest, disjoin these facts from the belief of the age. Much less, in poetry, can we revive past times, and give them the sentiments of our own days; and, if the opinions which were peculiar to them, are so repugnant to our own, that even our imagination cannot lend itself to the contemplation of them, the times when such opinions were prevalent, are out of the bounds of poetry,

and cannot be represented to us in an attractive manner. Thus, it may be doubted whether an European poem could please us, founded on the mythologies of the Hindoos, the Chinese, or the Peruvians. But, at the same time, the original poetry of these nations might highly interest us. In fact, in order to render a fiction poetically true, it is, above all things, requisite, that he who relates it should appear persuaded of its truth, and that they who listen to him should possess the grounds of a similar belief, although their reason may reject it. Thus, a Christian poet, who should sing the divinities of India, could never excite our sympathy, since he would not appear to believe what he sang. Thus, the allegory which Voltaire himself substitutes for the marvellous, freezes, instead of warming, the imagination; since it is neither the belief of the poet, nor of the actors, nor of the readers. But, if the marvellous is so closely allied to our prejudices; if it holds a place in our general opinions; if we have even felt it at some period of our lives, and known it felt by others, our imagination, eager for enjoyment, lends itself to the deception, as long as the poet requires. The classical mythology is so familiar to us from our education, that, even at this day, a poet who adopts it without intermixture, may hope to awaken feelings correspondent to the times of antiquity. But the superstition of the middle ages is familiar to us in another manner. It is the malady

of our times; it is by an effort that we are freed from it; and we naturally fall into it again, as soon as we allow our reason to slumber.

Voltaire, in wishing to banish the supernatural from poetry, has forgotten that belief is a great enjoyment. It is a want and a desire; dangerous, without doubt; and the theologian, the philosopher, the historian, and the statesman, ought to be on their guard against that avidity, with which, without examination, we seize and adopt the marvellous. But poetry is not required to be jealous of our enjoyments. That is not her province. She does not pretend to instruct. Her only aim is to flatter the imagination; and so far from resisting this soft illusion, her great art is exercised in inducing it. It is an easy thing for Voltaire, or for any man who reasons, to shew that these tales of enchantments, of sorcerers, and of demons, are idle popular stories; but no other supernatural belief would have taken such strong hold of our imagination, since no other would have been so familiar to us. No other mythology or allegory could excite in us such lively emotions for Tancred, for Rinaldo, and for the heroes who courageously defy these superhuman powers, since no other could find in us so ready a motive for their adoption.

Two knights are despatched to rescue Rinaldo from the enchantments of Armida. Near Ascalon, they meet a Christian magician, who in-

forms them of the snares which Armida had laid for Rinaldo, and that she had led him to an enchanted island, in the river Orontes, where the sirens sought to seduce him by their songs, and to awaken the love of pleasure in his heart. He had already abandoned himself to fatal repose. Armida approaches to revenge her wrongs, but is herself made captive by the charms of his person; and she who had abused the power of love, in rendering him the slave of her artifice, now becomes captive in her turn. Armida had then placed Rinaldo on her enchanted car, and had transported him to one of the Fortunate Islands, assured that she should there find neither rivals nor witnesses of her passion. But the power of the Christian magician is superior to that of the enchantress, and the two knights embark in a magic boat, which is swiftly wafted across the Mediterranean. The maritime cities of Syria, Egypt, and Lybia, pass in swift succession before their eyes, and the poet characterizes each in a few words. It is here that we find the celebrated stanza on Carthage:

> Great Carthage prostrate lies; and scarce a trace
> Of all her mighty ruins, marks the place
> Where once she stood: thus Desolation waits
> On loftiest cities, and on proudest states;*

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* Giace l alta Cartago, appena i segni
De l' alte sue ruine il lido serba;

Huge heaps of sand, and waving herbage hide
The pomp of power, the monuments of pride;
And yet does man, poor child of earth, presume
To mourn, vain arrogance! his mortal doom!

In some of the succeeding stanzas are foretold the discoveries of Columbus, and those adventurous voyages which have attached the name of an Italian to one of the quarters of the globe.* The two knights, at length, arrive at the enchanted gardens of Armida, which the poet has placed on a mountain in the Islands of the Blest. The description of these beautiful grounds inspires voluptuousness and delight, and the verses themselves have that softness and harmony which dispose to the joys of love which breathe around Armida. In the midst of the feathered choir, the Phœnix sings with human voice.† The warriors discover the two lovers together. They wait, until Armida has wandered from Rinaldo, to shew him, in an enchanted mirror, his effeminate dress, and the image of his soul. But the sight, alone, of their armour is sufficient to excite in the breast of Rinaldo, his former ardour

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Muoiono le città, muoiono i regni,
Copre i fasti e le pompe arena ed erba;
E l' uom d' esser mortal par che si sdegni?
O nostra mente cupida e superba!

Canto xv. *st.* 20.

* *Canto* xv. *st.* 30 to 32. † *Canto* xvi. *st.* 14 and 15.

for the field. The exhortations of Ubaldo awaken the blushes of shame; and he departs with the two warriors, in spite of the supplications of Armida, who endeavours to detain him by the most tender and persuasive entreaties, or at least to obtain permission to accompany him. He replies as one whose passion is subservient to his duty, and who awakes from the illusions of love, without renouncing its tenderness. He departs, and leaves her on the shore, where she faints through grief, when she finds that she has not the power to retain him. At length, recovering from her swoon, she destroys the gardens and the enchanted palace, and returns to Gaza, to join the army of the Sultan of Egypt.

The Sultan reviews his army, and Tasso describes the soldiers, and the various countries from whence they come, with that fulness of information which can alone give life and truth to the picture.* Armida, in the midst of these warriors, offers herself and her kingdom as a reward to him who shall avenge her on Rinaldo; whilst Rinaldo himself, on his return from the coast of Syria, receives from the hands of the Christian enchanter a present of arms, on which are engraved the glorious deeds of the supposed ancestors of the house of Este, from the fall of the Roman empire to the time of the Crusades. The enchanter then

* *Canto* xvii. *st.* 4 to 32.

speaks of Rinaldo's descendants, and, amongst others, announces a hero, whom he extravagantly eulogizes. This is Alfonso II., the last Duke of Ferrara, whom posterity is far from regarding with such favourable eyes, and whose pride and rigour Tasso himself lived to experience.*

Rinaldo, arriving at the camp, and repenting of his errors, which he confesses to Peter the Hermit, is despatched to the enchanted forest. It does not present to him, as to the other warriors, monsters and objects of terror, but all the charms of an earthly paradise, and all the allurements of love.† It is by the image of Armida, that the demons, defenders of this forest, hope to seduce him. She suddenly appears out of one of the trees, and supplicating him to spare her favourite myrtle, throws herself between it and the sword of Rinaldo. But the warrior, convinced that the image before him is nothing more than an empty phantom, redoubles his attack; nor does he cease, though the frightful demons surround and menace him, until the tree falls beneath his sword. The enchantment is thus destroyed, and the forest returns to its natural state. With the trees which are here found, the Christians prepare new machines of war, more ingenious than those which were employed in the first assault, but such as were often constructed

* *Canto* xvii. *st.* 90 to 94. † *Canto* xviii.

in the middle ages. Godfrey disposes every thing for an attack. During the combat, Heaven manifests its assistance in many miraculous ways. The fires of the Saracens are driven back upon themselves; and a rock falls on Ismeno, and crushes him at the moment he is preparing new enchantments. All the host of Heaven, and the souls of all the warriors who had fallen under the walls of Jerusalem, assemble in the air, to share the honour of this last victory. Of the mortal combatants, it is to Rinaldo that Tasso assigns the glory of success. At length, the Christian banner is planted on the rampart.* Tancred, in this last battle, encounters Argante, who, in disputing the ground with him, reproaches him with having failed to meet him as he had promised. They both then retire from the fight, and leave the city, to assuage their ancient hatred by single combat. But the fierce Argante, turning his eyes on the ancient capital of Judea, about to fall beneath the hands of her enemies, feels his soul subdued at the sight:

Argantes turning, as their steps they stay'd,
With thoughtful eye the conquer'd town survey'd.
Then, marking that the Pagan's shield was gone,
The gen'rous Tancred cast away his own,
And cried: "What sudden thoughts across thee come?
Shrinks then thy heart, presentient of its doom?

* *Canto* xviii. *st.* 100.

If now prophetic fears thy soul o'erpower,
Thy weakness visits thee in evil hour."
" On yon fair town," the Infidel replied,
" Judæa's scepter'd Queen, and Asia's pride,
That bows her vanquish'd head, I think with pain,
While I, to stay her downfall, strive in vain;
And insufficient shall th' atonement be,
Though Heaven adjudge thy forfeit head to me."*

Whilst the two chiefs are thus engaged in deadly combat, Tancred, having obtained the advantage, twice offers to the savage Circassian his life and his liberty. Twice, Argante rejects his mercy and renews the contest. He then falls, and dies, as he had lived, a stranger to fear. But

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* Quì si fermano entrambi, e pur sospeso
Volgeasi Argante à la cittade afflitta.
Vede Tancredi che 'l pagan difeso
Non è di scudo, e 'l suo lontano ei gitta.
Poscia lui dice; Or qual pensier t' a preso?
Pensi ch' è giunta l' ora a te prescritta?
S' antivedendo ciò timido stai,
È 'l tuo timore intempestivo omai.

Penso (risponde) à la città del regno
Di Giudea antichissima regina,
Che vinta or cade, e in vano esser sostegno
Io procurai de la fatal ruina.
E ch' è poca vendetta al mio disdegno
Il capo tuo che 'l cielo or mi destina.
Tacque, e incontra si van con gran risguardo,
Che ben conosce l' un l' altro gagliardo.

Canto xix. *st.* 9 and 10.

Tancred, exhausted by the blood he had lost in the combat, has not strength left to join his comrades, and swoons at a little distance from his adversary.

The Christians, on entering Jerusalem, make a dreadful massacre of all they meet. Aladin alone, with some warriors, and under the protection of Soliman, retires into the tower of David, the last hope of the Saracens. They flatter themselves that the army from Egypt may arrive in time for their deliverance. In fact, this army was on its march; and Godfrey had despatched an esquire of Tancred, named Vafrino, who understood all the languages of the East, to watch its movements. Vafrino is recognized in the Saracen camp by Erminia, and the princess, in love with Tancred, resolves to accompany his esquire back to the Latin camp. As they return together, and approach Jerusalem, they traverse the field of battle, where Argante and Tancred were lying motionless. Erminia, at first sight, believes that Tancred is dead; but, whilst she presses him in her arms, he betrays signs of life. She closes his wounds and dries them with her tresses; and meeting some Christian warriors, they, at her request, instead of bearing him to his tent, convey him to Jerusalem. This was the ardent wish of the chief, who, if he were destined to die of his wounds, was desirous of accomplishing his vow, and expiring at the sepulchre of his Redeemer.

The Egyptian army at length arrives in sight of Jerusalem; and, at sunrise on the ensuing morning, the Christians leave the city to meet it, and offer battle.* All epic poets have painted battles; all have exhausted on this favourite subject their most brilliant poetry; and none, perhaps, have succeeded in giving real pleasure to their readers. In the midst of his combats and his victories, Rinaldo meets the car of Armida; but, after having dispersed the band of her lovers, who had conspired against him, he avoids meeting her. In the mean time, Soliman and Aladin view the contest from the tower of David, and descend, with the remainder of the troops, to join in the battle. Aladin encounters Raymond of Toulouse, and the king falls beneath the sword of the aged warrior. Soliman, on the other side, meets Odoardo, a noble chief, and Gildippe, his valiant spouse, whom no danger had ever separated. Both perish by the arm of the Sultan of Nicea.† But this is the last of his victories. Rinaldo rushes to revenge their deaths, and attacks Soliman, who is slain by the Christian chief. Rinaldo then engages Tisaphernes, the last defender of Armida. This princess, surviving all the warriors who had sworn to avenge her, and overpowered by shame and love, attempts to put an

* *Canto* xx. † *Canto* xx. *st.* 94 to 100.

end to her life; but Rinaldo arrests her hand, reminds her of his former love, and declares himself her knight. He supplicates her pardon, and succeeds in assuaging her grief. Godfrey now gathers the last laurels of the day. Rimedon and Emireno die by his hand, and Altamoro surrenders himself a prisoner.

> Thus Godfrey conquer'd; nor the sinking Sun
> As yet his full diurnal race had run;
> But, ere his beams retired, the victor-train
> The rescued Town, the sacred Temple gain:
> And thither too, ere yet his blood-stain'd vest
> He laid aside, th' impatient Chieftain prest,
> There hung his arms, there pour'd his votive prayer,
> Kiss'd his loved SAVIOUR'S tomb, and bow'd adoring there.*

Of all descriptions of poetry, of all productions of the human mind, the epic poem justly claims the first rank. It is the noblest of all harmonious creations. It is the greatest possible extension given to those laws of symmetry, which, directing all parts to one object, produce, in each, the pleasure and perfection of the whole; which combine unity with variety, and in some sort initiate us into the secrets of creation, by discovering to us the single idea which rules the most dissimilar actions and the most opposite interests. The ode derives its charm from the regular expression of the varied sympathies of the soul. It is the essence of tragedy to combine in one action all

* *Canto* xx. *st.* 144.

subordinate events, and thus to excite our admiration for the unity of the design in a subject which commences in variety. But in the epic, the history of the universe, and that of the terrestrial and celestial powers, is submitted to the same principle of symmetry, and the pleasure which the poet gives is so much the greater as it proceeds from more extensive combinations. Thus the Cathedral of St. Peter's, and the Coliseum, become sublime from their immensity. We seem to behold mountains, which, yielding to a superior power, display the perfection of art in their whole, and in their parts. This unity in combination is the essence of epic poetry. It alone excites our admiration; and without it, we have only a romance in verse, which a truth of detail, a fertility of imagination, and a vivacity of colouring, may invest with charms, but which does not convey a sublime idea of the creative power which gives it birth.

The rivalship which it has been attempted to institute between Ariosto and Tasso, and which has for a long time divided Italy on the merits of these two great men, will afford us an opportunity of comparing the romantic with the classical style; not with a view of assigning its poet to each class, but to shew how far Tasso is indebted to each. These two kinds of poetry, so opposite in their nature, have received their names from the critics of Germany, who have declared themselves strong-

ly in favour of the romantic, and have considered as the result of system, what was formerly regarded as an excursion of the imagination, and as the violation of acknowledged rules. We must, however, adopt their classification; since, the poetry of almost all the modern nations being of the romantic class, it would be unjust and absurd to judge of it, by other rules than those by which the writers were themselves governed.

The appellation of the Romantic was taken from the Romance language, which owed its birth to the mixture of Latin with the ancient German. In a similar way the manners of Romance were formed from the habits of the people of the North, and the remnants of Roman customs. The civilization of the ancients had not, like ours, a double origin. All was there single and simple. The Germans explain the difference between the ancients or classics, and the moderns or romantic authors, by the difference of religion. They assert that the first, with a material religion, addressed all their poetry to the senses; while the second, whose religion is wholly spiritual, place all their poetry in the emotions of the soul. We may, however, raise many objections to this origin of the two classes of poetry. We may, above all, remark, that, at the epoch which gave birth to the Romantic poetry, in the ages of ignorance and superstition, catholicism was so nearly allied to paganism, that it

could not have a directly contrary influence on the poetry which it produced. Whatever we may think of their origin, we must, notwithstanding, acknowledge that the poets of the two epochs had different objects in view. Those of antiquity, aimed at exciting admiration by beauty and by symmetry. Those of modern times, wish to produce emotion by the feelings of the heart, or by the unexpected issue of events. The first placed a high value on a combined whole; the latter, on the effect of particular details. But Tasso has shewn how a man of powerful genius, uniting the two kinds, might be, at once, classical in the plan, and romantic in the painting of manners and situation. His poem was conceived in the spirit of antiquity, and executed in the spirit of the middle ages. Our customs, our education, the most touching passages in our histories, and, perhaps, even the tales of our nursery, always carry us back to the times and manners of chivalry. Every thing connected with that age awakens our sensibility. Every thing, on the contrary, that is derived from the mythological times of antiquity acts only on our memory. The two epochs of civilization were each preceded by their heroic ages. The Greeks ascended to the companions of Hercules, and we look back to the Paladins of Charlemagne. These two races of heroes are, perhaps, alike the creation of the imagination in a later age; but it is

exactly this which renders their relation the more true to the age that has created them. The heroic ages form the ideal of succeeding times. We seek in them the model of perfection which is most in unison with our opinions, our prejudices, our domestic sentiments, politics, and religion. It is, consequently, by a reference to this heroism, that poetry is enabled to exercise her power more strongly over the mind or the heart. Poetry, at least that of the first class, has the same object as every other branch of art. It transports us from the real into an ideal world. All the fine arts seek to retrace those primitive forms of beauty which are not found in the visible world, but the impression of which is fixed in our minds, as the model by which to regulate our judgment. It is not a correct opinion, that the Venus of Apelles was only a combination of all that the painter found most perfect in the most beautiful women. Her image existed in the mind of the artist before this combination. It was after this image that he selected subjects for the various parts. This original image could alone harmonize the various models which he consulted; and this assistance, purely mechanical, to retrace the most beautiful forms, served only to develope his own conception, the idea of beauty, as it is conceived by the mind, and as it can never be identified in any individual form.

In the same manner, we find an ideal image

of the beauty of character, of conduct, of passion, and, I had almost said, of crime, which has not been combined from different individuals; which is not the fruit of observation or of comparison; but which previously subsists in our own mind, and may be considered as the base of our poetic principles. Observation shews us that this idea is not the same in all nations. It is modified by general, and often by unknown causes, which seem to arise almost as much from diversity of origin as from education. The French knight possesses, in our imagination, a different character from that of the knight of Italy, Spain, England, or Germany; and all these champions of modern times differ still more from the heroes of antiquity, and bear the marks of the Romantic race, formed from the mixture of Germans and Latins. We easily pourtray, to our own minds, the modern hero, whose characteristics are universally recognized by all European nations; but we cannot form a just conception of the hero of antiquity, and are obliged to delineate his character from memory and classical recollections, and not from our individual feelings. It is this circumstance, which gives so cold an air to the classical poems of modern times. In the romantic species, the appeal is made directly to our own hearts; in the classical, it seems requisite to consult our books, and to have every feeling and idea justified by a quotation from an ancient author.

We have admired, in Tasso, the antique cast of his poem, and that beauty which results from the unity and regularity of design, and from the harmony of all its parts. But this merit, the principal one, perhaps, in our eyes, is not that which has rendered his work so popular. It is its romantic form, which harmonizes with the sentiments, the passions, and the recollections of Europeans. It is because he celebrates heroes whose type exists in their hearts, that he is celebrated in his turn by the gondoliers of Venice; that a whole people cherish his memory; and that, in the nights of summer, the mariners interchange the sorrows of Erminia and the death of Clorinda.

The genius who gave to Italy the rare honour of possessing an epic poem, and who had rendered illustrious his country and the prince under whom he lived, might justly have looked for that regard and kindness which are not refused to even the most slender talents. No poet, however, seems to have been more severely disappointed, or exposed to more lasting misfortunes. We have already observed that he was born at Sorrento, near Naples, on the eleventh of March, 1544, and was the son of Bernardo Tasso, a gentleman of Bergamo, who had himself enjoyed a poetical reputation. This was eleven years after the death of Ariosto. Tasso received the rudiments of his education in the college of Jesuits at Naples, and, from the age of eight years, had been remarkable

for his talent for poetry. The misfortunes of the Prince of San Severino, in which his father was involved, drove him, soon afterwards, from the kingdom of Naples. After some stay at Rome, he was sent to Bergamo, where he perfected himself in the ancient languages. During the year 1561, he studied the law at Padua. His father was desirous that he should follow that profession rather than the study of poetry, which had not assured to himself either independence or happiness. But the genius of Tasso was invincible. His reputation, as a poet, was already spread abroad, and was the early cause of one of his first vexations. During a visit which he made to Bologna, being accused of having written some satirical sonnets which had given offence to the government, its officers visited his chamber, and seized his papers. Tasso, whose temper was always irascible, regarded it as a stain upon his honour. He retired to Padua, and it was there that he finished, at the age of nineteen, his *Rinaldo*, a poem in twelve cantos. This poem celebrates the loves of Rinaldo of Montalbano, and the fair Clarice, during the early youth of this hero. It is a romance of knight errantry, and is treated in the manner of Ariosto. It was published in 1562, and dedicated to the Cardinal Luigi d'Este, brother of Alfonso II., the then reigning Duke of Ferrara. This vain and ostentatious prince, who was sovereign of Fer-

rara and Modena, from 1559 to 1597, exhausted his estates by his extravagance. He was ambitious of holding the first rank among the princes of Italy, which he endeavoured to do by assuring to himself the protection of the house of Austria, to which he was allied. He welcomed, with ardour, the poet, who became the ornament of his court, but whom he afterwards treated with so much cruelty. Tasso was invited to Ferrara in 1565. He was lodged in the castle, and a revenue was assigned to him, without imposing on him any duties. From that period he commenced his *Jerusalem delivered*, the fame of which preceded the publication, and which, known only by detached parts, was expected with impatience. In 1571, he accompanied the Cardinal d'Este to Paris, where he was honourably received. Soon after his return, his *Amyntas*, which he had composed without interrupting his other great work, was represented at the Court of Ferrara, with universal applause. He now expressed his hope of rivalling Ariosto; but in a style more elevated than that of the Homer of Ferrara. In a dialogue intitled *Gonzaga*, he had endeavoured to prove that unity ought to prevail in the plan of the epic, and that chivalry, which he really admired and loved, ought to be seriously treated, whilst all the other Italian poets had subjected it to burlesque. His sonnets, of which he wrote more than a thousand, and his other lyric poems,

in which he appears to rival Petrarch, and almost to equal him in harmony, sensibility, and delicacy of sentiment, manifest with how pure a flame the passion of love possessed his heart, and how devoted was his soul to all that is great, noble, and elevated. Yet the courtiers amongst whom he lived, reproached him with his enthusiastic devotion to women, and with the day-dreams of love and chivalry, in which he consumed his life.

Tasso, admitted to familiarity with the court, thought himself sufficiently on an equality there, to entertain and declare a passion, the indulgence of which was a source of constant misery to him. We learn from his poems that he was enamoured of a lady of the name of Eleonora; but he is thought to have been alternately in love with Leonora d'Este, sister of Alfonso; Leonora di San-Vitale, wife of Giulio di Tiena; and Lucretia Bendidio, one of the maids of honour to the princess. It appears that he disguised, under the name of the second, the too presumptuous attentions which he had dared to address to the first. Irritable to an excess, imprudent in his discourses, and hurried away by passion, he exhibited, in the moment of danger, a degree of valour worthy of the heroic ages; but his mind was troubled when he afterwards reflected on his rashness, and on the propriety which he considered that he had violated. A courtier, in whom he had implicitly confided, maliciously betrayed him.

Tasso attacked him with his sword, in the palace of the Duke. His adversary, with his three brothers, who had all at the same moment drawn their swords on the poet, was banished. On another occasion, Tasso aimed a blow at a domestic with his knife, in the apartments of the Duchess of Urbino, the sister of Alfonso, and was in consequence put under arrest. This was in the year 1577. He was then thirty-three years of age. Scarcely had his anger subsided, when he abandoned himself to terror on the consequences of his imprudence, to which the imagination of a poet not a little contributed. His reason became disturbed, and he found means to escape, and fled as far as Sorrento. He afterwards returned, and travelled over all Italy in a state of increasing agitation. Without money, without a passport, without attendants, he presented himself at the gates of Turin, where he was for some time refused admittance. Scarcely was he welcomed, when he fled from the court of the Duke of Savoy, where he imagined he was about to be betrayed. His love-attachment then led him back to Ferrara, where his friends interceded for his pardon, and the Duke, who thought his honour compromised by the most celebrated poet of Italy preferring his complaints, at every court, against the house of Este, shewed himself strongly disposed to grant him a kind reception. The poet returned to Ferrara in 1579, at the time of

the celebration of the marriage of Alfonso II. with Margaret of Gonzaga. Neglected by the sovereign, in the midst of these festivities, he thought he perceived, in the courtiers and domestics, traces of distrust and contempt, and he abandoned himself to his resentment with his usual violence. It has also been related of him, that one day, at court, when the Duke and the Princess Eleonora were present, he was so smitten with the beauty of the Princess, that, in a transport of passion, he approached her and embraced her before all the assembly. The Duke, gravely turning to his courtiers, expressed his regret that so great a man should have been thus suddenly bereft of his reason; and made this circumstance a pretext for shutting him up in the hospital of St. Anne, an asylum for lunatics, in Ferrara. This anecdote is in itself highly doubtful; and, even if the confinement in the first instance had been justifiable, the severity with which it was continued arose more from the policy than from the anger of the Duke. His pride would not permit a man of so much celebrity, whom he had offended, to wander through Italy; and who, after having shed lustre on his own court, might depreciate it, and confer similar glory on another. He wished him to be considered mad, in order to justify his own severity; and, indeed, in the eyes of a selfish and unfeeling prince, accustomed only to the forms of etiquette, insensible to any other motive of action

than interest and vanity, Tasso, at all times enthusiastic, impetuous, irritable as a child, and as suddenly soothed, did not widely differ from a deranged person. This imprisonment of the poet was the cause of an entire aberration of mind. He, in turns, imagined that he had held disrespectful language against his prince, had too strongly manifested his love, and had even given cause to suspect his allegiance. He addressed himself to all his friends, to all the princes of Italy, to Bergamo, his paternal city, to the Emperor, and to the Holy Inquisition, imploring from them his liberation. His body became enfeebled by the agitation of his mind. At one time, he thought himself poisoned; at another time, the victim of magic and enchantments; and terrifying apparitions haunted his couch in the sleepless hours of night.

To add to his misfortunes, his poem had been printed without his permission, and from an imperfect copy. Editions were multiplied, without his consent, during the very time of his confinement; and the surprise and enthusiasm of the Italian public gave rise to the most violent literary disputes respecting his *Jerusalem delivered*. The admirers of Ariosto saw, with alarm, a new poet set up as a rival to their idol, and were exasperated by the enthusiastic devotion which some of the friends of Tasso rendered to the poet. Camillo Pellegrini, in 1584, endeavoured to shew how greatly

Tasso had excelled Ariosto. This was the signal for a general contest; and the detractors of Tasso used the more violence in the attack, as they considered he had been elevated to an unjust height. Tasso, in the midst of his sufferings and captivity, still preserved all that vigour of mind which had rendered him a poet. He defended himself with warmth, sometimes with wit, often with subtlety. He appealed to the authority of Aristotle, whom his opponents pretended to set up as an arbiter between Ariosto and himself. But he considered himself humiliated by the decision of the Academy della Crusca of Florence, which declared itself against him, and which was then beginning to acquire that authority over the language, which it has since exercised in Italy. From that period, he probably projected, and, in 1588, commenced, with a broken spirit, the laborious and irksome task of remodelling his poem. It was thus that he composed his *Gerusalemme conquistata*, which he lengthened by four cantos. He suppressed the touching incident of Olindo and Sophronia, which, it was objected, served to divert the interest before the action was commenced. He changed the name of Rinaldo to Ricardo. He represented this hero as one of the Norman conquerors of the kingdom of Naples, and deprived him of all relationship with the house of Este, which he no longer chose to flatter. He corrected words and phrases on which grammatical

criticisms had been made; but, at the same time, he deprived his poem of all life and inspiration. Nearly all the stanzas are changed, and almost always for the worse. I have seen, in the Library of Vienna, the manuscript of Tasso, with its numerous alterations. It is a melancholy monument of a noble genius, robbed of its energy and depressed by calamity.

Tasso was confined, seven years, in the hospital; and the voluminous writings which came from his pen during this time, failed to convince Alfonso that he was in possession of his reason. The princes of Italy interposed for Tasso with the Duke, whose self-love was interested in resisting all their entreaties; and the more so, because his rivals in glory, the Medici, interfered, with more particular earnestness, to procure the liberation of the poet. Tasso, at length, obtained his freedom, on the fifth of July, 1586, at the instance of Vincenzio Gonzaga, prince of Mantua, on the occasion of his marriage with the sister of Alfonso. After spending some time in Mantua, he proceeded to the kingdom of Naples; but, on his way, he was obliged to write, at Loretto, to the Duke of Guastalla, to ask for the loan of a small sum of money, without which he could not proceed on his journey. His affairs, indeed, were at all times deranged, and he always experienced the want of money. There is still preserved a will under his hand, of the year 1573, by which it is seen that

his wardrobe was in pledge to the Jews; and he directs, that, after selling his clothes, and discharging what was owing on them, the rest should be employed in placing a stone, with an inscription, on his father's grave. If the money arising from his effects should not be sufficient, he flatters himself that the Princess Eleonora, through her regard to him, would have the kindness to make up the deficiency. He survived nine years, residing occasionally at Rome and Naples, chiefly in the houses of illustrious and generous friends, who had always difficulty in saving him from the persecutions of fortune.* His last letters are filled with details of his pecuniary embarrassments. At length, the Cardinal Cintio Aldobrandini received him into his house, and had prepared a festival for the occasion, in which it was intended to crown him in the Capitol; but death deprived him of this honour. The poet, whose mind now always dwelt on his health, and who was constantly administering to himself new and powerful medicines, died at Rome, on the twenty-fifth of April, 1595, aged fifty-one.

Although the fame of Tasso rests on his *Jerusalem delivered*, another of his works, the *Amyntas*, has obtained a just celebrity. The imitation of the ancients had, at an early period, given a pastoral poetry to the Italians. Virgil had composed

* Tasso, *edit. Veneta*, t. x. p. 68.

eclogues; and the moderns thought themselves obliged to do the like. The imitation of this description of poetry may be considered as less servile, since the ideal of country life is nearly the same with the ancients and with ourselves. The eclogues of Virgil paint neither what is, nor what should be, but rather the dreams of happiness, inspired by the sight of the country, and the simplicity, peace, and innocence, which we love to contrast with real life. The Italian tongue seemed better adapted than any other, by its simplicity and grace, to express the language of people, whom we figure to ourselves as perfectly infantine in their manners. The beauty of the climate, the charms of contemplation and indolence in these happy countries, seem to dispose us to the dreams of rural life; and the manners of the Italian peasants approach nearer to the pastoral character than those of any other people. The poet was not obliged to turn his steps to Arcadia. The hills of Sorrento, where Tasso was born, the borders of the Sebeto, or some silent and retired valley in the kingdom of Naples, might, with equal propriety, become the scene for his ideal shepherds, without renouncing the manners and customs of his times. It is thus that Tasso, in his *Jerusalem delivered*, has described as a modern shepherd, though at the same time with much ideal and poetical effect, the old man who afforded an asylum to Erminia.

The numerous Italian poets, who have also composed Bucolics, had adopted another system. Sanazzaro, the most celebrated amongst them, of whom we shall speak in the next chapter, proposed to himself a close imitation of Virgil. He took his shepherds from the fabulous ages of Greece, and adopted the Grecian mythology. The French pastoral poets, and Gessner among the Germans, followed in the same path, and were, in my opinion, all in error. The heart and the imagination do not easily receive impressions, to which they are such entire strangers. We willingly adopt many ideas which are beyond the range of our knowledge; but it is with repugnance that we receive, as the foundation of our poetical belief, what we know to be false. Apollo, fauns, nymphs, and satyrs, never make their appearance in modern poetry without a chilling effect. Their names alone lead us to compare and to judge, and this circumstance is directly opposed to all excitement, sensibility, and enthusiasm.

Agostino Beccari, a poet of Ferrara, (1510—1590), gave a new character to Bucolic poetry, and was the creator of the genuine pastoral drama. His piece entitled *Il Sagrifizio*, was represented in 1554, in the palace of Hercules II. then duke of Ferrara, and was printed in the following year. Beccari, like Sanazzaro, places his shepherds in Arcadia, and adopts the man-

ners and mythology of antiquity ; but he connects their conversations by the action, or rather by an union of dramatic actions. During the annual festival of Pan, which is celebrated between the mountains of Menalus and Erimanthus, three couple of rusticlovers, separated by various chances, are re-united by the means of two aged shepherds, and become happy, in spite of the snares which a satyr spreads for the shepherdesses, and of the jealousy with which Diana inculcates a cold indifference in her nymphs. A chorus and songs are intermixed with this piece, the music of which had some celebrity ; but the five long acts of which it is composed are frigid and dull. The personages unceasingly discourse, but never act. Their languishing conversations create in us a distaste for Arcadian love ; and a satyr and a drunken hind, who were intended to entertain the spectators, revolt us by their rude attempts at gaiety and wit.

Eighteen years afterwards, in 1572, Tasso produced his *Amyntas*, the idea of which he owed in part to the *Sagrifizio* of Beccari. This piece, also, belongs to the infancy of the dramatic art. However far removed these pastorals might be from the mysteries by which the theatre had been renewed, it is doubtful whether they were at all superior to them ; for life and action and interest are, at least, as necessary to the drama as

a strict observance of rules, and a regard to the unities. The *Amyntas*, like the *Sagrifizio*, and the *Orfeo* of Politiano, is nothing more than a tissue of ill-connected eclogues. But the talents evinced in the details, the charms of the style, and the colouring of the poetry, atone for all defects; and the illustrious bard has succeeded, even in this ill-chosen description of poetry, in erecting a monument worthy of his genius.

The plot of the *Amyntas* is simple. Amyntas is enamoured of Sylvia, who disdains his love. He delivers her from the hands of a satyr, who had carried her off; but obtains, for his services, no token of gratitude. She joins the other nymphs in the chace, and after having wounded a wolf, she flies from him, with the loss of her veil, which is found torn and stained with blood. The shepherds inform Amyntas, that Sylvia has fallen a prey to the wolves which she had attacked. He resolves to die, and precipitates himself from the summit of a rock. A shepherd comes to announce his death on the stage, at the moment when Sylvia is relating how she has escaped from the jaws of the wolf, to which, it was supposed, she had fallen a prey. Insensible until this moment, she is now moved with pity, on hearing that Amyntas has died for her. She goes in search of his body, to give it burial, and resolves to follow him to the tomb; when it is announced that Amyntas is only bruised

by his fall, and they are thenceforth happy in each other's love. The whole of this action, very improbable, and ill connected, passes behind the scenes. Each act, of which there are five, commences by the recital of an unexpected catastrophe. But the success of the *Amyntas* was owing less to the interest of the dramatic part, than to the sweetness of the poetry, and to the voluptuousness and passion that breathe in every line. All other thoughts, all other feelings, seem banished from Arcadia. The shepherds speak incessantly of dying, and still their griefs have in them nothing sombre or rude. They are the milder sorrows of love, which inspire a sort of illusory enjoyment.

This impression, however, is sometimes weakened by the *concetti*, or affected contrast of words and ideas, which began to be introduced about this period, for the second time, into Italian poetry; and which, inviting imitation by an appearance of wit and ingenious invention, subjected it, in the succeeding age, to the empire of bad taste. Thus Love is made to say, in the prologue:

> But this she knows not; she is blind; not I,
> Whom blind the vulgar blind have falsely called.*

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* Ciò non conosce; e cieca ella, e non io
Cui cieco, a torto, il cieco volgo appella.

In another place, Daphne is made to say:

> Ungraceful was my grace, and to myself
> Unpleasing, all that others pleased in me.*

This play on words, of which Tasso affords a lamentable precedent, often injures his style, and chills our feelings in his *Jerusalem delivered*. It occurs frequently in his sonnets; and was more easily imitated than his beauties. In other points of view, his *Amyntas* was, for some time, a model which all authors thought themselves bound to copy. At the close of the sixteenth century, twelve or fifteen Italian poets published pastoral dramas. Several ladies, a sovereign Prince of Guastalla, and a Jew, named Leon, attempted the same description of poetry. Others, ambitious of passing for original poets, whilst they were nothing more than copyists, transferred the scene to the borders of the sea, and gave to the public piscatory dramas, as before we had piscatory and marine eclogues. The most celebrated of these compositions is the *Alcæus* of Antonio Ongaro, which, for beauty of versification, will bear comparison with the works of the first poets. But the author followed so closely the footsteps of

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* E m' era
Malgrata la mia gratia, e dispiacente
Quanto di me piaceva altrui.

Tasso in the weaving of his plot, and in the incidents, differing only in the scene, which is transferred to the abodes of fishermen, that his *Alcæus* may with propriety be termed a marine *Amyntas*.

Tasso, and the writers of dramatic pastorals who have succeeded him, have used in their dialogues a versification which served as a model to Metastasio, and which, after having been admitted as the language of the lyric drama, is found to be equally well adapted to tragedy. This is the iambic without rhyme, *verso sciolto*, intermixed, whenever a more lively expression is requisite, with verses of six syllables. When the language becomes more ornamented, and the imagination takes a wider range, it is relieved by rhymes. The higher blank verse of five iambics, which possesses both dignity and ease, and which holds a place between eloquence and poetry, is not, perhaps, in all the movements of tenderness and passion, sufficiently harmonious; and the intervention of a short verse relieves it, and gives it a musical and pleasing expression. In the same manner, a mixture of rhyme, regular lines, and even strophes in the chorus, carries us easily, and almost imperceptibly, from the elevated language of conversation to the highest order of lyric poetry. We seem to feel all the musical charm of the language which Tasso has

employed, in the following verses of the first act, where Amyntas recounts his first falling in love:

* While yet a boy, scarce tall enough to gather
The lowest hanging fruit, I became intimate
With the most lovely and beloved girl
That ever gave to the winds her locks of gold.
Thou know'st the daughter of Cydippe and
Montano, who has such a store of herds,
Sylvia, the forest's honour, the soul's firer?
Of her I speak. Alas! I lived, one time,
So fastened to her side, that never turtle
Was closer to his mate, nor ever will be.
Our homes were close together, closer still
Our hearts; our age conformable, our thoughts
Still more conformed. With her, I tended nets

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* Essend' io fanciulletto, si che a pena
Giunger potea, con la man pargoletta,
A corre i frutti da i piegati rami
Degli arboscelli, intrinseco divenni
De la più vaga e cara verginella
Che mai spiegasse al vento chioma d'oro.
La figliuola conosci di Cidippe
E di Montan, ricchissimo d' armenti,
Silvia, honor de le selve, ardor de l' alme;
Di questa parlo: ahi lasso, vissi à questa
Così unito alcun tempo, che frà due
Tortorelle più fida compagnìa
Non sarà mai ne fue;
Congiunti eran gli alberghi,
Ma più congiunti i cori:
Conforme era l' etate
Ma 'l pensier più conforme.

For birds and fish ; with her, followed the stag,
And the fleet hind ; our joy and our success
Were common : but in making prey of animals,
I fell, I know not how, myself a prey.

Tasso composed a prodigious number of works. The complete collection of them forms twelve volumes in quarto ; but all that he has left is not equally worthy of his genius. Two entire volumes are filled with prose ; almost the whole of which consists of polemic criticism, and is wanting in ease and elevation of style. The poet was accustomed to study harmony and dignity only in his verse. He wrote a comedy called *Gli Intrighi d'Amore.* This was a description of writing in which, from the original bent of his mind, and his melancholy temperament, he was little qualified to succeed : yet the dialogue possesses both facility and grace. Towards the close of his life, he undertook a poem on the creation, *Le sette giornate del Mondo creato;* but his mind was exhausted by sufferings, and this poem is remarkable only for the eloquence of the style, and the beauty of some of the descriptive parts. A tragedy which he wrote, *Il Torrismondo,* ob-

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Seco tendeva insidie con le reti
Ai pesci ed agli augelli, e seguitava
I cervi seco, e le veloci dame ;
E 'l diletto e la preda era commune.
Ma mentre io fea rapina d' animali
Fui, non sò come, à me stesso rapito.

tained a higher degree of reputation. He composed it, during his confinement in the hospital, and published it in 1587, with a dedication to the Prince Gonzaga, to whom he owed his liberation. The subject is, probably, entirely his own invention. A king of the Ostrogoths marries his own sister, mistaking her for a foreign princess. But, agreeably to the false idea which the Italians at that time possessed of the dramatic art, there is no real action in this piece. It is composed of recitals of what passes off the stage, and of conversations which prepare new incidents. There is, at the close of each act, a chorus of persons who sing odes or *canzoni*, on the inconstancy of all sublunary things. Some scenes are beautifully developed, but an ill-judged imitation of the ancients has deprived the poet of the vigour of his genius. The verses, *versi sciolti*, possess dignity, and sometimes eloquence; but the piece is, on the whole, cold and uninteresting. The chorus alone, at the conclusion, touches our hearts; for the poet, in writing it, applied it to himself and his misfortunes, and to those illusions of glory, which now seemed to fade before his eyes.

As torrents, rushing from their Alpine height,
  As forked lightnings fly
  Athwart the summer sky,
As wind, as vapour, as the arrow's flight,
  Our glories fade in night;
The honour of our name is sped,
Like a pale flower that droops its languid head.

The flattering forms of Hope no more prevail;
The palm and laurel fade;
While, in the gathering shade,
Come sad lament, and grief, and sorrow pale;
Nor Love may aught avail,
Nor Friendship's hand can bring relief,
To check our flowing tears, or still our lonely grief.*

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* E come alpestree rapido torrente,
Come acceso baleno
In notturno sereno,
Come aura, ò fumo, ò come stral repente.
Volan le nostre fame; ed ogni onore
Sembra languido fiore.

Che più si spera, o che s' attende omai?
Dopo trionfo e palma,
Sol quì restano all' alma
Lutto e lamenti, e lagrimosi lai.
Che più giova amicizia ò giova amore?
Ahi lagrime! ahi dolore!

CHAPTER XV.

State of Literature in the Sixteenth Century.—Trissino, Rucellai, Sanazzaro, Berni, Machiavelli, Pietro Aretino, &c.

Our three last chapters were devoted to two illustrious poets, who elevated themselves, in the sixteenth century, above all their rivals, and whose fame, passing beyond the bounds of Italy, had extended itself over all Europe. In tracing the history of the literature of Italy, it is important to distinguish the most remarkable of that body of orators, scholars, and poets, who flourished in the sixteenth century, and, more particularly, during the pontificate of Leo X.; and who gave to Europe an impulse in letters, the influence of which is felt to the present day.

The study of the ancients, and the art of poetry, had been universally encouraged during the fifteenth century. All the free cities, as well as the sovereigns of Italy, endeavoured to assume to themselves the glory of extending their protection to literature. Pensions, honours, and confidential employs, were bestowed on men

who had devoted themselves to the study of antiquity, and who best knew how to expound and to contribute to the restoration of its treasures. The chiefs of the republic of Florence, the Dukes of Milan, of Ferrara, and of Mantua, the Kings of Naples, and the Popes, were not merely friends of science. Having themselves received classical educations, they were, almost all, better acquainted with the ancient languages, with the rules of Greek and Latin poetry, and with all relating to antiquity, than the greater part of our scholars of the present day. This universal patronage of letters was not, however, of lasting duration. The rulers of states even pursued, in the sixteenth century, a contrary course; but it was not sufficient to arrest the impression which had been made, and to check the impulse already given.

The first persecution, which letters experienced in Italy, dates from the middle of the fifteenth century. It was short-lived, but violent, and has left melancholy traces in the history of literature. The city of Rome was desirous, after the example of other capitals, of founding an academy, consecrated to letters and to the study of antiquity. The learned popes, who had been elevated to the chair of St. Peter, in the fifteenth century, had beheld with satisfaction, and encouraged this literary zeal. A young man, an illegitimate son of the illustrious house of San

Severino, but who, instead of assuming his family appellation, embraced the Roman name of Julius Pomponius Lætus, after having finished his studies under Lorenzo Valla, succeeded him, in 1457, in the chair of Roman eloquence. He assembled around him, at Rome, all those who possessed that passion for literature and for ancient philosophy, by which the age was characterized. Almost all were young men; and, in their enthusiasm for antiquity, they gave themselves Greek and Latin names, in imitation of their leaders. In their meetings, it is said, they declared their predilection for the manners, the laws, the philosophy, and even the religion of antiquity, in opposition to those of their own age. Paul II. who was then Pope, was not, like many of his predecessors, indebted to a love of letters for his elevation to the pontificate. Suspicious, jealous, and cruel, he soon became alarmed at the spirit of research and enquiry which marked the new philosophers. He felt how greatly the rapid progress of knowledge might contribute to shake the authority of the Church, and he viewed the devotion of these scholars to antiquity, as a general conspiracy against the state and the holy faith. The academy, of which Pomponius Lætus was the chief, seemed particularly to merit his attention. In the midst of the Carnival, in 1468, whilst the people of Rome were occupied with the festival, he arrested all

the members of the academy who were then to be found in the capital. Pomponius Lætus alone was absent. He had retired to Venice, the year after the elevation of Paul II. to the pontificate, and had resided there three years; but, as he held a correspondence with the academicians at Rome, the Pope beheld in him the chief of the conspiracy, and procured his apprehension, through the favour of the Venetian senate. The academicians were then imprisoned and consigned to the most cruel tortures. One of the number, Agostino Campano, a young man of great expectations, expired under his sufferings. The others, among whom were Pomponius himself and Platina, the historian of the Popes, underwent the ordeal, without the confession of any criminal motive being extorted from them. The Pope, exasperated at their obstinacy, repaired himself to the castle of St. Angelo, and ordered the interrogatories to be repeated under his own eyes; not upon the supposed conspiracy, but on subjects of faith, in order to detect the academicians in some heretical doctrines; but in this he was disappointed. He declared, however, that any person who should name the academy, either seriously or in jest, should thenceforth be considered a heretic. He detained the unfortunate captives a year in prison; and, when he at length released them, it was without acknowledging

their innocence. The death of Paul II. put an end to this system of persecution. Sixtus IV. his successor, confided to the care of Platina the library of the Vatican, and he allowed Pomponius Lætus to re-commence his public lectures. The latter succeeded in re-assembling his dispersed academicians. He was esteemed for his probity, his simplicity, and his austerity of manners. He devoted his life to the study of the monuments of Rome; and it is more particularly owing to him, that we have been enabled to form a correct judgment on its antiquities. He died in 1498. His death was regarded as a public calamity, and no scholar had, for a long period, obtained such distinguished obsequies.

The persecution of Paul II. was a direct attack upon literature. But the public calamities which succeeded, overwhelmed all Italy, and reached every class of society, at the same moment. They commenced in the year 1494, with the invasion of Italy, by Charles VIII. The sacking of cities, the rout of armies, and the misfortunes and death of a great number of distinguished men; evils, always accompanying the scourge of war; were not the only fatal consequences of this event. It was a death-blow to the independence of Italy; and, from that period, the Spaniards and the Germans disputed the possession of her provinces. After a series of ruinous wars and numberless

calamities, fortune declared herself in favour of Charles V. and his son. The Milanese and the kingdom of Naples remained under the sovereignty of the house of Austria; and all the other states, which yet preserved any independence, trembled at the Austrian power, and dared to refuse nothing to the wishes of the Imperial ministers. All feeling of national pride was destroyed. A sovereign prince could not afford an asylum, in his own states, to any of his unfortunate subjects, whom a viceroy might choose to denounce. The entire face of Italy was changed. Instead of princes, the friends of arts and letters, who had long reigned in Milan and Naples, a Spanish governor, distrustful and cruel, now ruled by the aid of spies and informers. The Gonzagas of Mantua plunged into pleasures and vice, to forget the dangers of their situation. Alfonso II., at Modena and Ferrara, attempted, by a vain ostentation, to maintain the appearance of that power which he had lost. In place of the republic of Florence, the Athens of the middle ages, the nurse of arts and sciences, and in the place of the early Medici, the enlightened restorers of philosophy and letters, three tyrants, in the sixteenth century, succeeded each other in Tuscany: the ferocious and voluptuous Alexander; Cosmo I., founder of the second house of Medici, who rivalled his model

and contemporary, Philip II. in profound dissimulation and in cruelty; and Francis I., his son, who, by his savage suspicion, carried to its height the oppression of his states. Rome also, which, at the commencement of the century, had possessed, in Leo X., a magnanimous pontiff, a friend of letters, and a generous protector of the fine arts and of poetry, was now become jealous of the progress of the Reformation, and only occupied herself in resisting the dawning powers of the human intellect. Under the pontificates of Paul IV., Pius IV., and Pius V., (1555-1572), who were elevated by the interest of the Inquisition, the persecution against letters and the academies was renewed, in a systematic and unrelenting manner.

Such, notwithstanding, had been the excitement of the human mind in the preceding century, and so thickly were the germs of literature scattered from one end of Italy to the other, by an universal emulation, that no other country can be said to have raised itself to a higher pitch of literary glory. Among the numbers of men who had devoted themselves to letters, Italy produced, at this glorious epoch, at least thirty poets, whom their contemporaries placed on a level with the first names of antiquity, and whose fame, it was thought, would be commensurate with the existence of the world. But even the names of these

illustrious men begin to be forgotten; and their works, buried in the libraries of the learned, are, now, seldom read.

The circumstance of their equality in merit, has, doubtless, been an obstacle to the duration of their reputation. Fame does not possess a strong memory. For a long flight, she relieves herself from all unnecessary incumbrances. She rejects, on her departure, and in her course, many who thought themselves accepted by her, and she comes down to late ages, with the lightest possible burthen. Unable to choose between Bembo, Sadoleti, Sanazzaro, Bernardo Accolti, and so many others, she relinquishes them all. Many other names will also escape her; and we perceive the blindness of our presumption, when we compare the momentary reputations of our own day with the glory of the great men of antiquity. The latter, we behold conspicuous through a succession of ages, like the loftiest summits of the Alps, which, the farther we recede from them, appear to rise the higher.

But what most contributed to injure the fame of the illustrious men of the sixteenth century, was the unbounded respect which they professed for antiquity, and the pedantic erudition which stifled their genius. Their custom, also, of writing always after models, which were not in harmony with their manners, their characters, and their political and religious opinions; and their

efforts to revive the languages in which the great works which they admired were composed, materially tended to this result. It has long been said, that he who only translates will never be translated; and he who imitates, renounces at the same time the hope of being imitated. Still, the noble efforts of these studious men in the cause of letters, the recollections of their past glory, and the celebrity which yet attaches to them, merit an enquiry, on our part, into the history of their most distinguished scholars.

We have already spoken of Trissino, in mentioning his epic poem of *Italia liberata*, and we have seen how much this long-expected work disappointed the general expectation. It is possible, however, to fail in writing an epic poem, and still to possess claims to distinction. Gian-Giorgio Trissino had, in fact, sufficient merit to justify that celebrity which, during a whole century, placed his name in the first rank in Italy. Born at Vicenza, in 1478, of an illustrious family, he was equally qualified, by his education, for letters and for public business. He came to Rome when he was twenty-four years of age, and had resided there a considerable time, when Pope Leo X., struck by his talents, sent him, as his ambassador, to the Emperor Maximilian. Under the pontificate of Clement VII. he was also charged with embassies to Charles V. and to the Republic of Venice, and was decorated by the former with the

order of the Golden Fleece.* In the midst of public affairs he cultivated, with ardour, poetry and the languages. He was rich; and possessing a fine taste in architecture, he employed Palladio to erect a country-house, in the best style, at Criccoli. Domestic vexations, and more particularly a law-suit with his own son, embittered his latter days. He died in 1550, aged seventy-two.

The most just title to fame possessed by Trissino, is founded on his *Sofonisba*, which may be considered as the first regular tragedy since the revival of letters; and which we may, with still greater justice, regard as the last of the tragedies of antiquity, so exactly is it founded on the principles of the Grecian dramas, and, above all, on those of Euripides. He wants, it is true, the genius which inspired the creators of the drama at Athens, and a more sustained dignity in the character of the principal personages; but, to a scrupulous imitation of the ancients, Trissino had the art of uniting a pathetic feeling, and he succeeded in moving his audience to tears.

Sophonisba, daughter of Asdrubal, and wife of Syphax, king of Numidia, after having been promised to his rival, Massinissa, learns, in Cirtha,

* It should seem that Charles V. permitted him only to add this decoration to his arms, without enrolling him amongst the knights.

where she is shut up, the defeat and captivity of her husband. Soon afterwards, Massinissa himself enters the same city, at the head of his army, and finds the queen surrounded by a chorus of women of Cirtha. Sophonisba, supported by the chorus, implores Massinissa to spare her the humiliation of being delivered, a captive, to the Romans. Massinissa, after having shewn how far he is himself dependent on that people, and how difficult it will be to grant this favour, pledges, at the same time, his word to the queen, that she shall not be delivered up alive. But soon after, at the same time that his former love for the queen revives, the difficulty of rescuing Sophonisba increases, in consequence of the Romans entering the city in force; and he despatches a messenger to Lælius, to announce to him that he had married Sophonisba, in order that she might not be regarded as an enemy. Lælius warmly reproaches Massinissa with the marriage, as rendering him the ally of the greatest enemies of Rome. On the other part, Syphax, now a prisoner, accuses Sophonisba of being the cause of his calamity; and rejoices to find that his enemy has married her, as he feels assured that she will drag him into the same abyss into which he had himself been precipitated by her. Massinissa resists, with firmness, the orders of Lælius and Cato, to relinquish Sophonisba, as the captive of Rome; but when Scipio, in his turn, presses him, employ-

ing alternately authority, persuasion, and friendship, Massinissa, unable farther to excuse himself, yields to his entreaties; but demands permission to fulfil the promise he had given to Sophonisba, not to deliver her alive to the Romans. He then sends to her, by the hands of a messenger, a cup of silver, with poison, informing her, that as he could not keep the first part of his promise, he, at all events, assures her of the second, and desiring her, if the occasion should become urgent, to conduct herself in a manner worthy of her noble blood. Sophonisba, in fact, after having sacrificed to Proserpine, swallows the poison, and returns on the stage to die, in the arms of her sister and of the women who compose the chorus. Massinissa, who had not relinquished the hope of saving her, and who intended to rescue her in the night, and to transport her to Carthage, returns too late to execute his project; but he places her son and her sister in safety. The piece is not divided into acts and scenes, because this division did not exist in the Grecian drama, and was subsequently invented; but the chorus, who constantly occupy the stage, and mingle in the dialogue, sing, when left alone, odes and lyric stanzas, which, by dividing the action, give repose to the piece.

It would, doubtless, be easy to multiply criticisms on this piece, written, as it was, in the infancy of the dramatic art, and without a knowledge of stage effect. It is unnecessary to animadvert either

on the narrative, in which Sophonisba recounts to her sister the history of Carthage, from the reign of Dido to the second Punic war; on the improbability of a chorus of female singers always occupying the stage, even when the soldiers of the enemy enter the city as conquerors; on the entire want of interest in the characters of Syphax, Lælius, Cato, and Scipio himself; on the weakness of Sophonisba, who, on the day that her husband is made prisoner, marries his enemy; or, in short, on the contemptible part assigned to Massinissa. It is easy to any one to urge these defects, and there is no fear of their being imitated. But it is to be regretted that the modern stage has not profited more by the Greek model which Trissino has given. His chorus, above all, is in the true spirit and character of antiquity. With the ancients, their whole lives were public; their heroes lived in the midst of their fellow-citizens, and their princesses, amongst their women. The chorus, the friends and comforters of the unhappy, transport us to the ancient times and ancient manners. We cannot, and ought not to introduce them into pieces, of which the subject is modern; but, in excluding them from those dramas which are founded on the history and mythology of the ancients, and substituting, in their stead, the presence of modern confidants, we ascribe to the Greeks the customs and language of our own age and of our own courts.

The poetry of Trissino is equally deserving of praise. He had remarked that the Greeks, in their best works, did not confine tragedy to the style of a dignified conversation; but lavished on it the richness of their numerous metres, applying them to the various situations in which their actors were placed; sometimes confining them to iambics, which contributed only to a somewhat loftier expression; and sometimes raising them to the most harmonious lyric strophes. He saw also that they proportioned the flight of their imagination to the metre which they employed; speaking, by turns, as orators or poets, and rising, in their lyric strophes, to the boldest images. Trissino alone, among their modern imitators, has preserved this variety. The usual language of his heroes is in *versi sciolti*, blank verse; but, according to the passions which he wishes to express, he soars to the most varied forms of the ode, or *canzone*, and by this more poetical language he proves that the pleasure of the drama consists not wholly in the imitation of nature, but also in the ideal beauty of that poetic world which the author substitutes for it.

Trissino, like the Greeks, has not treated of a love-intrigue, but of a great political revolution, the fall of an ancient kingdom, and the public misfortunes of a heroine, who, to the pride of royalty, united the sentiments and virtues of a citizen of Carthage. He has placed this action

before the eyes of his audience, more strongly than those who have succeeded him. There are, it must be acknowledged, many recitals made by the messengers, and all are too long; but we see Sophonisba expecting and receiving the intelligence of the defeat of Syphax, and of the loss of her kingdom; we see her meet Massinissa, supplicate him, and obtain his promise of protection; we see the Numidian prisoners conducted before the Roman Prætor; Massinissa, resisting Lælius and Cato, but yielding to Scipio; and Sophonisba, expiring on the stage. It is from this last scene that I shall borrow a fragment, to show the powers of Trissino in the pathetic.

Sophonisba, led on the stage, after having swallowed poison, commends her memory to the women of Cirtha, and implores Heaven that her death may contribute to their repose. She bids farewell to the beloved light of day, and to the smiling face of earth. Turning, then, to her sister Erminia, who requests to follow, and to die with her, she entrusts to her care her infant son, and obtains from Erminia a promise that she will live for his sake.

Soph. That thou thy pity giv'st is to my heart
Sweet solace, and to death I go resign'd!
Yet, from my hands, receive my darling son.*

* Sof. Molto mi piace che tu sia disposta
Di compiacermi, or morirò contenta;

ERM. Beloved gift, and from a hand beloved.
SOPH. Henceforth, let him in thee a mother find.
ERM. Willingly, since of thee he is deprived.
SOPH. O son, sweet son, when of thy mother's breast
Thou hast most need, I'm torn from thee for ever.
ERM. Alas! such sorrow who can e'er survive?
SOPH. Time is the assuager of all mortal grief.
ERM. Sister, I pray thee, let me follow thee!
SOPH. Ah! no, my cruel death may well suffice.
ERM. Fortune, how swift thou robb'st me of all bliss.
SOPH. O my dear mother, thou art far away!
O that I might, at least, behold thy face
Once more, once more embrace thee, ere I die!
ERM. Thrice happy she, whose lot is not to see
This cruel stroke of fate; for sorrow, when
Narrated, carries not so keen a barb.

Ma tu, sorella mia, primieramente
Prendi 'l mio figliolin da la mia mano.
ERM. O da che cara man, che caro dono!
SOF. Ora in vece di me gli sarai madre.
ERM. Cosi farò, poiche di voi fia privo.
SOF. O figlio, figlio, quando più bisogno
Hai de la vita mia, da te mi parto.
ERM. Oimè, come farò fra tanta doglia?
SOF. Il tempo suol far lieve ogni dolore.
ERM. Deh, lasciatemi ancor venir con voi.
SOF. Basta, ben basta de la morte mia.
ERM. O fortuna crudel, di che mi spogli!
SOF. O madre mia, quanto lontana siete!
Almen potuto avessi una sol volta
Vedervi ed abbracciar ne la mia morte.
ERM. Felice lei, felice, che non vede
Questo caso crudel: ch' assai men grave
Ci pare il mal che solamente s' ode.

SOPH. O my fond father, brothers, all beloved,
Long is it since I saw you, and, alas!
I see you now no more. The gods befriend you!
ERM. Ah! what a treasure they must this day lose!
SOPH. My sweet Erminia, in this mournful hour
Thou art my father, brother, sister, mother!
ERM. Thrice happy could I but for one suffice!
SOPH. Ah me! my strength forsakes me, and I feel
Life ebb apace. I struggle, now, with death.
ERM. Alas! how heavy falls thy fate on me!
SOPH. But who are you? whence come they? and whom
seek they?
ERM. Ah! wretched me! what do thine eyes behold?
SOPH. What! seest thou not this arm that drags me down?
Ah! whither wilt thou snatch me? Be not rude;
I know my fate, and, willing, follow thee.
ERM. O boundless sorrow! grief ineffable!

SOF. O caro padre, o dolci miei fratelli!
Quant' è ch' io non vi viddi, ne più mai
V'aggio a vedere! Iddio vi faccia lieti.
ERM. O quanto, quanto ben perderann' ora!
SOF. Erminia mia, tu sola a questo tempo
Mi sei padre, fratel, sorella, e madre.
ERM. Lassa, valessi pur per un di loro.
SOF. Or sento ben che la virtù mi manca
A poco a poco, e tuttavia cammino.
ERM. Quanto amaro è per me questo viaggio!
SOF. Che veggio quì? Che nuova gente è questa?
ERM. Oimè infelice? Che vedete voi?
SOF. Non vedete voi questo che mi tira?
Che fai? dove mi meni? Io so ben dove!
Lasciami pur, ch' io me ne vengo teco.
ERM. O che pietate, o che dolore estremo!

SOPH. Why weep ye? Know ye not that all of earth,
When born to life, are destined heirs of death?
CHOR. Ah yes! but thou art all untimely snatch'd
From life, and hast not reach'd thy twentieth year.
SOPH. A welcome boon never too soon arrives.
ERM. Sad boon, that whelms us all in utter woe.
SOPH. Sister, approach, support me; for my brain
Is dizzy, and night gathers o'er my eyes.
ERM. Recline upon my bosom, sister dear!
SOPH. Sweet son! few moments, and thou hast no more
A mother. May the gods watch over thee!
ERM. Ah! me! what direful words are these I hear
Thee utter?—Stay, ah! stay!—leave us not yet.
SOPH. Vain wish! death drags me on the darksome way.
ERM. Ah! yet look up! thy babe would kiss thy lips.
CHOR. A single look.

SOF. A che piangete? Non sapete ancora
Che ciò che nasce, a morte si destina?
CORO. Aimè che questa è pur troppo per tempo;
Ch' ancor non siete nel vigesim' anno.
SOF. Il ben, esser non può troppo per tempo.
ERM. Che duro ben è quel che ci distrugge!
SOF. Accostatevi a me, voglio appoggiarmi,
Ch'io mi sento mancare; e già la notte
Tenebrosa ne vien ne gli òcchi miei.
ERM. Appoggiatevi pur sopra 'l mio petto.
SOF. O figlio mio, tu non arai piu madre:
Ella già se ne và; statti con Dio.
ERM. Oimè, che cosa dolorosa ascolto!
Non ci lasciate ancor, non ci lasciate!
SOF. I non posso far altro, e sono in via.
ERM. Alzate il viso a questo che vi bascia.
CORO. Riguardatelo un poco.

SOPH. Ah! me, I can no more.
CHOR. The gods receive thy soul!
SOPH. I die—farewell!

Trissino also wrote a comedy after the ancient model, with all the personages of the pieces of Terence, and even with the chorus, which the Romans, in their improvements, had excluded from the stage. It is called *I Simillimi;* the everlasting twins, which appear in all theatres. He also left a number of sonnets and *canzoni*, written in imitation of Petrarch, but little deserving of our notice.

A friend of Trissino, Giovanni Rucellai, laboured with not less zeal, and often with more taste to render the modern Italian poetry entirely classical, and to introduce, into every class of it, a pure imitation of the ancients. Born at Florence, in 1475, and allied to the house of Medici, he was employed in affairs of state. After the elevation of Leo X. to the pontificate, he entered into orders, without, however, obtaining, either from him or from Clement VII, a cardinal's hat, to which honour he aspired. He died in 1525, at the castle of St. Angelo, of which he was governor.

SOF. Aimè, non posso.
CORO. Dio vi raccolga in pace.
SOF. Io vado. Addio.

His most celebrated production is a didactic poem on Bees, of about fifteen hundred lines, which receives a particular interest from the real fondness which Rucellai seems to have entertained for these creatures. There is something so sincere in his respect for their virgin purity, and in his admiration of the order of their government, that he inspires us with real interest for them. All his descriptions are full of life and truth.*

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* The description, which Rucellai gives of the civil wars of the Bees, is extremely pleasing. He thus explains the readiest way of putting a stop to their battles:

Delay not, instant seize a full-leaved branch,
And through it pour a shower, in minute drops,
Of honey mingled, or the grape's rich juice.
Ere finished, you shall wondering behold
The furious warfare suddenly appeased;
And the two warring bands joyful unite,
And foe embracing foe; each with its lips
Licking the other's wings, feet, arms, and breast,
Wherein the luscious mixture hath been shed,
And all inebriate with delight. As when
The Switzers, in sedition, sudden seize
Their arms, and raise the war-cry; if a man
Of aspect grave, rising, with gentle voice
Reproving, mitigates their savage rage,
Then to them yields full vases of rich wine;
Each, in the foaming bowl, plunges his lips
And bearded chin; his fellow, with fond kiss,
Embraces, making sudden league or truce;
And, with the bounty of the grape o'erpower'd,
Drinking oblivion of their injuries.

His poem is written in blank verse, but with great harmony and grace. The Bees themselves, who, it is said, dread the neighbourhood of an echo, forbade him the use of rhyme. He thus opens his poem:

As bending o'er my lyre to sing your praise
In lofty rhymes, chaste virgins, angels fair,
That haunt the sparkling river's flowery marge,
At the first dawn of day, a sudden sleep

Non indugiar; piglia un frondoso ramo,
E prestamente sopra quelle spargi
Minutissima pioggia, ove si truovi
Il mele infuso, o 'l dolce umor de l'uva;
Che fatto questo, subito vedrai
Non sol quetarsi il cieco ardor de l' ira,
Ma insieme unirsi allegre ambe le parti,
E l' una abbracciar l' altra, e con le labbra
Leccarsi l' ale, i piè, le braccia, il petto,
Ove il dolce sapor sentono sparso,
E tutte inebbriarsi di dolcezza.
Come quando nei Suizzeri si muove
Sedizione, e che si grida a l' arme;
Se qualche uom grave allor si leva in piede
E comincia a parlar con dolce lingua,
Mitiga i petti barbari e feroci;
E intanto fa portare ondanti vasi
Pieni di dolci ed odorati vini;
Allora ognun le labbra e 'l mento immerge
Ne le spumanti tazze, ognun con riso
S'abbraccia e bacia, e fanno e pace e tregua,
Inebbriati da l' umor de l' uva
Che fa obbliar tutti i passati oltraggi.

Surprised me, and in dreams I saw descend .
A choir of your fair race, and from their tongues,
Yet redolent of honied sweets, these words
I heard. O Friend, that honour'st thus our race,
Shun, in thy dulcet verse, the barbarous rhyme;
For well thou know'st that image of the voice
Which babbles forth from Echo's airy cave,
Was ever to our realm a hated foe.*

But it was as a tragic poet that Rucellai attempted to tread in the footsteps of his friend Trissino, although in this respect he appears to be much inferior to him. Two dramas of Rucellai remain, written in blank verse, with a chorus, and as much resembling the Grecian pieces in their distribution, as a learned Italian could make them, at an epoch when the study of antiquity was the first of sciences. One of these is entitled *Rosmonda,* and the other, *Orestes.* Rosmonda, the wife of Alboin, the first king of the Lombards, who, to avenge her father, destroyed her husband, was

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* Mentr' era per cantar i vostri doni
Con alte rime, o Verginette caste,
Vaghe angellette dell' erbose rive;
Preso dal sonno in sul spuntar dell' alba,
M' apparve un coro della vostra gente;
E dalla lingua, onde s' accoglie il mele,
Sciolsono in chiare voci queste parole:
O spirito amico .....
Fuggi le rime, e 'l rimbombar sonoro;
Tu sai pur che l' immagin de la voce,
Che risponde dai sassi ove Eco alberga,
Sempre nemica fù del nostro Regno.

a new subject for the stage. Rucellai altered historical facts sufficiently happily, in order to connect events which a long space of time had in reality separated; to unite more intimately causes and effects; and to describe the former relation of his characters to each other. But *Rosmonda* is only the sketch of a tragedy. The situation is not marked by any developement; time is not given for the exhibition of the passions; nor are they at all communicated to the spectators. Conversations and long dialogues usurp the place which ought to be reserved for action; and the atrocity of the characters and events, which are rather related than shewn, forbids all sympathy. The other tragedy of Rucellai is an imitation of Euripides, and is called *Orestes*, although the subject is that known under the name of Iphigenia in Tauris. But the example of the Greek poet has not availed Rucellai. His piece is deficient in interest, in probability, and, above all, in action. The Italian dramatists of the sixteenth century, seem to have aimed at copying the defects rather than the beauties of the Greeks. If there chance to be, in the dramas of the Greeks, any unskilful exposition, or any recital of overwhelming tediousness, they never fail to take it for their model. It would almost appear to have been their intention that Sophocles and Euripides should be received with hisses; and they seem to wait, at the conclusion of the piece,

to inform us that the part which has so wearied us is from the ancients. Euripides had the fault of multiplying moral precepts, and philosophical dissertations; but one of his maxims is only like the text to a commentary in Rucellai. The chorus, which the ancient poet devoted to generalise the ideas and sentiments arising out of the action, became, in the hands of his Italian imitator, the depository of that trivial philosophy, to which sentiment is no less a stranger than poetry. The recognition of Orestes and Iphigenia is retarded and embarrassed to a degree of tediousness. No character is perfectly drawn; no situation is managed in a manner to render it touching; and the catastrophe, the circumstance of the flight of Iphigenia and the Greeks, has not only the defect of not having been pre-meditated and foreseen, but even excites our laughter, instead of engaging our sympathy; since Thoas, alarmed at the predictions of the prophetess, and placed under lock and key, with all his guard, suffers himself to be duped like the tutor of a comedy.

The early Italian drama comprises a considerable number of pieces. But the pedantry which gave them birth, deprived them, from their cradle, of all originality, and all real feeling. The action and the representation, of which the dramatic poet should never for an instant lose sight, are constantly neglected; and philosophy and erudi-

tion usurp the place of the emotion necessary to the scene. Alamanni, in his *Antigone*, possesses more truth and sensibility than Rucellai, in his *Orestes;* but he has rather translated than imitated Sophocles. Sperone Speroni d' Alvarotti wrote a tragedy on the subject of Canace, the daughter of Æolus, whom her father cruelly punished for an incestuous passion; but this is scarcely the outline of a tragedy, and nothing more than partial conversations on the most calamitous events. There is, perhaps, a greater degree of talent in the *Œdipus* of Giovanni Andrea dell' Anguillara; in the *Jocasta* and *Mariana* of Lodovico Dolce; and, above all, in the *Orbecche* of Giovanni Battista Giraldi Cintio, of Ferrara. This last piece, which was represented in the house of the author, in Ferrara, in 1541, excites and keeps alive our curiosity. In some scenes, it even awakes, in the minds of the spectators, alarm, terror, and pity. But Giraldi composed his tragedies from tales of his own invention, which possessed neither truth nor probability; and the *Arrenopia* is as absurd as the *Orbecche* is extravagant. The soliloquies are dull and frigid; we have dialogues, instead of action; and a chorus of pretended lyrics, which contain only common ideas clothed in rhyme, destroys all sympathy as soon as it is heard.

The inferiority of the Italians to the Spaniards, in dramatic invention, is remarkable; and particu-

larly at the epoch of their greatest literary glory. These pretended restorers of the theatre conformed, it is true, to all the precepts of Aristotle, from the time of the sixteenth century, and to the rules of classical poetry, even before their authority was proclaimed. But this avails little, when they are wanting in life and interest. We cannot read these tragedies without insufferable fatigue; and it is difficult to form an idea of the patience of the spectators, condemned to listen to these long declamations and tedious dialogues, usurping the place of the action, which ought to be brought before their eyes. The Spanish comedies, on the contrary, although extravagant in their plots, and irregular in their execution, always excite our attention, curiosity, and interest. It is with regret that we suspend the perusal of them in the closet, and they are not less adapted for the stage, where the dramatic interest is throughout maintained, and the spectator is always interested in the events passing before him.

Even the names of the dramatic pieces of Italy, in the sixteenth century, are scarcely preserved in the records of literature. But posterity seems to have paid a greater respect to the memory of some of the lyric and pastoral poets. Many of these have retained great celebrity, even after their works have ceased to be read. Such, amongst others, was the case with Giacomo Sanazzaro, born at Naples, on the twenty-eighth of July,

1458; who died, in the same city, at the end of the year 1530; and whose tomb, very near to that of Virgil, may almost be said to partake of its celebrity. Although he belonged to a distinguished family, he did not inherit any fortune; owing all that he enjoyed to the favour of the sovereigns of Naples. He was early remarkable for his proficiency in Greek and Roman literature; but his love for a lady of the name of Carmosina Bonifacia, the rest of whose history is wholly unknown, engaged him to write in Italian. He celebrated this lady in his *Arcadia*, and in his sonnets; and, when death deprived him of her, he renounced the Italian muses for Latin composition. From that time, he was devoted to religious observances, which had before held little place in his thoughts. The kings of Naples of the house of Aragon, Ferdinand I., Alfonso II., and Frederic, loaded him with favours. The last of these princes presented him with the beautiful *Villa Mergolina*, where Sanazzaro delighted to realize his dreams of happiness, in an Arcadia of his own. But the wars between the French and the Spaniards, in the kingdom of Naples, overwhelmed him in common ruin with his benefactors. Faithful to the house of Aragon, he sold almost all his possessions, in order to remit the proceeds to Frederic, when the dethroned king was sent as a hostage to France. Sanazzaro followed him thither, and shared his exile, from 1501 to 1505. He was destined to

close the eyes of his royal benefactor; and expressed his attachment for him, and his regret for his misfortunes, with a warmth of patriotism and courage, which do honour to his character. His Mergolina, to which he had returned, was afterwards pillaged and wasted by the army of the Prince of Orange, in the service of Charles V. He passed the latter years of his life in a village of the Somma, one of the heights of Vesuvius. A Marchioness Cassandra, to whom he was attached, resided there also, but at the distance of a mile; and Sanazzaro, a septuagenarian, never passed a day without visiting her. He died at the end of the year 1530, aged seventy-two.

The *Arcadia* of Sanazzaro, on which his reputation principally depends, was begun by him in his early youth, and published in 1504, when he was forty-six years of age. A species of romantic pastoral, in prose and without action, serves to connect twelve romantic and pastoral scenes, and twelve eclogues of shepherds in Arcadia. Each part commences with a short recital in elegant prose, and ends with an eclogue in verse. In the seventh, Sanazzaro himself appears in Arcadia; he recounts the exploits of his family, the honours they obtained at Naples, and how love had driven him into exile. Thus, the ancient Arcadia is, to Sanazzaro, nothing more than the poetical world of his own age. He awakes, in the twelfth eclogue, as from a dream. The plan of

this piece may be subject to criticism, but the execution is elegant. Sanazzaro, inspired by a sentiment of tender passion, found, in his own mind, that reverie of enthusiasm that belongs to pastoral poetry. The sentiments, as in all idyls, are sometimes trite and affected, though sometimes, also, breathing warmth and nature. The thoughts, the images, and the language, are always poetical, except that he has too frequently introduced Latin words, which were not then naturalized into the Tuscan dialect. The stanzas, with which each eclogue terminates, are generally under the lyric form of *canzoni*. The fifth, of which the three first stanzas are here translated, on the tomb of a young shepherd, may serve to compare the poetical feelings of the Italians, which are wholly derived from the imagination, with those of the North, in which the heart has the greater share.

Ergasto thus speaks, over the tomb of his deceased friend:

O brief as bright, too early blest,
Pure spirit, freed from mortal care,
Safe in the far-off mansions of the sky,
There, with that angel take thy rest,*

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* Alma beata e bella
Che, da legami sciolta,
Nuda salisti ne' superni chiostri,
Ove con la tua stella

Thy star on earth; go, take thy guerdon there;
Together quaff th' immortal joys, on high,
Scorning our mortal destiny;
Display thy sainted beauty bright,
'Mid those that walk the starry spheres,
Through seasons of unchanging years;
By living fountains, and by fields of light,
Leading thy blessed flocks above;
And teach thy shepherds here to guard their care with love.

Thine, other hills, and other groves,
And streams, and rivers never dry,
On whose fresh banks thou pluck'st the amaranth flowers;
While, following other loves
Through sunny glades, the Fauns glide by
Surprising the fond Nymphs in happier bowers.
Pressing the fragrant flowers,

Ti godi insieme accolta;
E lieta ivi, schernendo i pensier nostri,
Quasi un bel sol ti mostri
Trà li più chiari spirti;
E co i vestigi santi
Calchi le stelle erranti;
E trà pure fontane, e sacri mirti
Pasci celesti greggi,
E i tuoi cari pastori indi correggi.

Altri monti, altri piani,
Altri boschetti e rivi,
Vedi nel cielo, e più novelli fiori;
Altri Fauni e Silvani
Per luoghi dolci estivi,
Seguir le Ninfe in più felici amori;
Tal fra soavi odori
Dolce cantando all' ombra,
Trà Dafni e Melibeo,

Androgeo, there, sings in the summer shade,
By Daphnis' and by Melibœus' side,
Filling the vaulted heavens wide
With the sweet music made;
While the glad choirs that round appear,
Listen to his dear voice, we may no longer hear.

As to the elm is his embracing vine,
As their bold monarch to the herded kine,
As golden ears to the glad sunny plain,
Such wert thou to our shepherd youths, O swain!
Remorseless death! if thus thy flames consume
The best and loftiest of his race,
Who may escape his doom?
What shepherd ever more shall grace
The world like him, and with his magic strain
Call forth the joyous leaves upon the woods,
Or bid the wreathing boughs embower the summer floods?

Siede il nostro Androgeo,
E di rara dolcezza il cielo ingombra;
Temprando gli elementi
C ol suon de' nuovi inusitati accenti.

Quale la vite all' olmo,
Ed agli armenti il toro,
E l' ondeggianti biade a' lieti campi;
Tale la gloria e 'l colmo
Fostù del nostro coro.
Ahi cruda morte! e chi fia che ne scampi,
Se con tue fiamme avvampi
Le più elevate cime?
Chi vedrà mai nel mondo
Pastor tanto giocondo,
Che, cantando fra noi si dolci rime,
Sparga il bosco di fronde,
E di bei rami induca ombra sù l'onde?

There have been more than sixty editions of the *Arcadia*. At the present day, it is little read, as nothing is more opposite to the spirit of our age, than the characteristic insipidity of pastorals. Sanazzaro, besides his Latin poems, which are highly celebrated, and which he published under his academical name of Actius Syncerus, wrote many sonnets and *canzoni*. In order to afford, to those who do not read Italian, a specimen of the thoughts and imagination of a celebrated poet, whose name is often repeated, and whose works are little read, a translation of one of his sonnets, which he puts into the mouth of his deceased mistress, to whom he had been tenderly attached, is here given.

Beloved, well thou know'st how many a year
I dwelt with thee on earth, in blissful love;
Now am I call'd to walk the realms above,
And vain to me the world's cold shows appear.
Enthroned in bliss, I know no mortal fear,
And in my death with no sharp pangs I strove,
Save when I thought that thou wert left to prove
A joyless fate, and shed the bitter tear.*

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* Vissa teco son io molti e molt' anni,
Con quale amor, tu 'l sai, fido consorte;
Poi recise il mio fil la giusta morte,
E mi sottrasse alli mondani inganni.

Se lieta io goda ne i beati scanni,
Ti giuro che 'l morir non mi fu forte,
Se non pensando alla tua cruda sorte,
E che sol ti lasciava in tanti affanni.

But round thee plays a ray of heavenly light,
And ah! I hope, that ray shall lend its aid
To guide thee through the dark abyss of night.
Weep then no more, nor be thy heart dismay'd;
When close thy mortal days, in fond delight
My soul shall meet thee, in new love array'd.

A new description of poetry arose in Italy, under Francesco Berni, which has retained the name of the inventor. The Italians always attach the appellation of *bernesque* to that light and elegant mockery, of which he set the example, and which pervades all his writings. The gaiety with which he recounts serious events, without rendering them vulgar, is not confounded by his countrymen with the burlesque, to which it is so nearly allied. It is, above all, in the *Orlando Innamorato* of the Count Boiardo, remodelled by Berni in a free and lively style, that we perceive the fullness of his genius. His other works, imbued, perhaps, with more comic wit, trespass too frequently on the bounds of propriety. Francesco Berni was born about 1490, at Lamporecchio, a castle between Florence and Pistoia. We know little more of his biography

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Ma la virtù che 'n te dal ciel riluce,
Al passar questo abisso oscuro e cieco
Spero che ti sarà maestra e duce.

Non pianger più: ch' io sarò sempre teco;
E bella e viva al fin della tua luce
Venir vedrai me, e rimenarten meco.

than what he relates himself, in a jesting tone, in the sixty-seventh canto of his *Orlando Innamorato*. He was of a noble, but not opulent family. At nineteen years of age, he went to Rome, full of confidence in the protection of Cardinal Dovizio da Bibbiena, who, in fact, took little interest in his welfare. After the death of that prelate, being always embarrassed, he entered as secretary into the Apostolic Datary*. He there found the means of life, but was oppressed by

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* A few stanzas have been selected, as displaying at the same time the style and the personal character of Berni.

Credeva il pover' uom di saper fare
Quello esercizio, e non ne sapea straccio;
Il padron non potè mai contentare,
E pur non uscì mai di quello impaccio;
Quanto peggio facea, più avea da fare;
Aveva sempre in seno e sotto il braccio,
Dietro e innanzi, di lettere un fastello,
E scriveva, e stillavasi il cervello.

Quivi anche, o fusse la disgrazia, o 'l poco
Merito suo, non ebbe troppo bene:
Certi beneficioli aveva loco
Nel paesel, che gli eran brighe e pene:
Or la tempesta, or l'acqua, ed or il foco
Or il diavol l'entrate gli ritiene;
E certe magre pensioni aveva
Onde mai un quattrin non riscoteva.

. . . . . .

Era forte collerico e sdegnoso,
Della lingua e del cor libero e sciolto;

an irksome employ, to which he was never reconciled. His labours increased, in proportion as he gave less satisfaction. He carried under his

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Non era avaro, non ambizioso,
Era fedele ed amorevol molto:
Degli amici amator miracoloso,
Così anche chi in odio avea tolto
Odiava a guerra finita e mortale;
Ma più pronto er' a amar ch' a voler male.

Di persona era grande, magro e schietto,
Lunghe e sottil le gambe forte aveva,
E'l naso grande, e 'l viso largo, e stretto
Lo spazio che le ciglia divideva:
Concavo l' occhio avea azzurro e netto,
La barba folta, quasi il nascondeva
Se l'avesse portata, ma il padrone
Aveva con le barbe aspra questione.

Nessun di servitù giammai si dolse
Nè più ne fù nimico di costui,
E pure a consumarlo il diavol tolse,
Sempre il tenne fortuna in forza altrui:
Sempre che comandargli il padron volse,
Di non servirlo venne voglia a lui,
Voleva far da se, non comandato,
Com' un gli comandava era spacciato.

Cacce, musiche, feste, suoni e balli,
Giochi, nessuna sorte di piacere
Troppo il movea, piacevangli i cavalli
Assai, ma si pasceva del vedere,
Che modo non avea da comperalli;
Onde il suo sommo bene era in giacere
Nudo, lungo, disteso, e 'l suo diletto
Era non far mai nulla, e starsi in letto.

arms, in his bosom, and in his pockets, whole packets of letters, to which he never found time to reply. His revenues were small, and when he came to collect them, he frequently found, according to his own expressions, that storms, water, fire, or the devil, had swept them entirely away. His mirth, and the verses and tales which he recited, made him an acceptable member of society; but, whatever love he might have had for liberty, he remained always in a state of dependance. By his satires he made himself many enemies, the most vindictive of whom was Pietro Aretino, whom he, in turn, did not spare. Berni, who informs us that his greatest pleasure was lying in bed and doing nothing, experienced, if we are to believe common rumour, a death more tragic than we should have been led to expect from his situation in life. He was the common friend of the Cardinal Ippolito and the Duke Alessandro de' Medici, who were cousins-german, and was solicited by the latter of these to poison his relation. As he refused to participate in so black a crime, he was himself poisoned a few days afterwards, in the year 1536. In the same year, the Cardinal Ippolito was, in fact, poisoned by his cousin.

Berni had diligently studied the ancients, and wrote himself elegant Latin verse. He had purified his taste, and accustomed himself to cor-

rection. His style possesses so much nature and comic truth, that we can easily imagine the enthusiasm with which it is to this day adopted as a model. But, under his hand, every thing was transformed into ridicule. His satire was almost always personal; and when he wished to excite laughter, he was not to be restrained by any respect for morals or for decency. His *Orlando Innamorato* is ranked, by the Italians, among their classical poems. Berni, even more than Ariosto, treats chivalry with a degree of mockery. He has not, indeed, travestied the tale of Boiardo. It is the same tale sincerely narrated, but by a man who cannot resist indulging in laughter at the absurd suggestions of his own genius. The versification is carefully formed; wit is thrown out with a lavish hand; and the gaiety is more sportive than that of Ariosto; but the two poems will not bear a comparison in respect to imagination, colouring, richness, and real poetry. The other works of Berni are satirical sonnets, and *Capitoli*, in *terza rima*, among which the eulogy on the Plague, and that on Aristotle, are conspicuous. They were prohibited, and, indeed, not without very good reason.

Few men were more admired and obtained a greater share of fame, in the sixteenth century, than Pietro Bembo, who was born, at Venice, of an illustrious family, on the twenty-sixth of May,

1470. Connected in friendship with all the men of letters and first poets of his age, he was a lover of the celebrated Lucretia Borgia, daughter of Alexander VI., and wife of Alfonso, Duke of Ferrara; and was a favourite with the Popes Leo X. and Clement VII., who loaded him with honours, pensions, and benefices. He enjoyed, from the year 1529, the title of Historiographer to the Republic of Venice; and Paul III. finally created him a Cardinal in 1539. Wealth, fame, and the most honourable employs seemed to pursue him, and snatched him, in spite of himself, from a life of epicurean pleasure, which he did not renounce when he took the ecclesiastical habit. His death was occasioned by a fall from his horse, on the eighteenth day of January, 1547, in his seventy-seventh year. He was the admiration of his own age, which placed him in the first rank of classic authors. His fame, however, has since materially declined. Bembo, who had professedly studied the Latin and the Tuscan languages, and composed, in both, with the utmost purity and elegance, was, all his life, too exclusively occupied with words to support the brilliancy of his fame, after the Latin was no longer cultivated with ardour, and custom had introduced many alterations in the Tuscan. The style of Bembo, which was highly extolled in his lifetime, appears, at the present day, affected and greatly laboured. We are aware of his imitations in

every line, and seek in vain for an expression of genuine sentiment. Neither is he distinguished by depth of thought, or by vivacity of imagination. He has aspired to rank himself with Cicero in Latin prose, and with Petrarch and Boccaccio in Italian poetry and prose; but, however great the resemblance may be, we instinctively distinguish the original from the copy, and the voluminous writings of Bembo now find few readers. His History of Venice, in twelve books, his letters, and his dialogues, in the Italian language, are among the best of his prose works. His *canzoniere* may bear a comparison with that of Petrarch. His conversations on love, which he entitled *Asolani*, and which are interspersed with poetry, approach to the style of the tales of Boccaccio. The singular purity of style, on which he prides himself, and which his contemporaries acknowledged, has not, on all occasions, preserved him from *concetti* and affectation.* Occasionally,

* We may instance the following verses of Perottino, in the *Asolani*, B. i. p. 12.

Quand' io penso al martire,
Amor, che tu mi dai gravoso e forte,
Corro per girne a morte,
Così sperando i miei danni finire.
Ma poi ch' io giungo al passo
Ch' è porto in questo mar d' ogni tormento,
Tanto piacer ne sento
Che l' alma si rinforza ed io non passo.

however, we find in him not only imagination, but real sensibility.* His Latin poems are in high esteem, and he was sufficiently master of

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Così il viver m' ancide,
Così la morte mi ritorna in vita;
O miseria infinita
Che l' uno apporta e l' altro non recide.

In another canzone, he bewails himself, as a victim to the two extremes of torture, in the flames of love which scorch him and in the tears which inundate him; and he thus affectedly concludes the piece:

Chi vidde mai tal sorte,
Tenersi in vita un uom, con doppia morte.

* The following stanza, from a canzone of Bembo, may, it appears to me, be pointed out as comprising this two-fold merit. *Asolani*, B. i. p. 21.

Qualor due fiere, in solitaria piaggia,
Girsen pascendo semplicette e snelle,
Per l' erba verde, scorgo di lontano,
Piangendo lor comincio: O lieta e saggia
Vita d' amanti, a voi nemiche stelle
Non fan vostro sperar fallace e vano.
Un bosco, un monte, un piano,
Un piacer, un desio, sempre vi tene.
Io de la donna mia quanto son lunge?
Deh! se pietà vi punge,
Date udienza inseme a le mie pene.
E 'ntanto mi riscuoto, e veggio espresso
Che per cercar altrui, perdo me stesso.

the modern tongues to have also attempted Castilian verse.*

The same age gave the name of *Unico* to Bernardo Accolti, of Arezzo, born before 1466, and who died after the year 1534. Whenever this celebrated poet announced his intention of reciting his verses, the shops were shut up, and the people flocked in crowds to hear him. He was surrounded by prelates of the first eminence; a body of Swiss troops accompanied him; and the court was lighted by torches. But, as Mr. Roscoe has justly remarked, there wanted but one circumstance to crown his glory—that his works had perished with himself. Their style is hard and poor; his images are forced, and his taste is perverted by affectation. He has left us a

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* About the same time, the example of the Italians produced a change in Spanish poetry. But Bembo, in his Castilian verses, of which he has left a considerable number, retained the old national rhythm, as, for instance, in the following *Villancico:*

O muerte que sueles ser
De todos mal recebida,
Agora puedes volver
Mil angustias en plazer
Con tu penosa venida.
Y puesto que tu herida
A sutil muerte condena,
No es dolor tan sen medida
El que da fin a la vida
Como el que la tiene en pena.

comedy, *La Virginia;* some octaves and *terza rima;* some lyric poetry; and some *strambotti*, or epigrams.

It is not by the side of these evanescent poets that we must rank the illustrious secretary of the Florentine republic, the great Nicolo Machiavelli, whose name is in no danger of being buried in oblivion. This celebrity is his due, as a man of profound thought, and as the most eloquent historian, and most skilful politician that Italy has produced. But a distinction less enviable, has attached his name to the infamous principles which he developed, though probably with good intentions, in his treatise, entitled *Il Principe;* and his name is, at the present day, allied to every thing false and perfidious in politics.

Machiavelli was born at Florence, on the third of May, 1469, of a family which had enjoyed the first offices in the Republic. We are not acquainted with the history of his youth; but, at the age of thirty, he entered into public business, as chancellor of the state, and from that time he was constantly employed in public affairs, and particularly in embassies. He was sent four times, by the Republic, to the court of France; twice to the Imperial court; and twice to that of Rome. Among his embassies to the smaller princes of Italy, the one of the longest duration was to Cæsar Borgia, whom he narrowly observed at the very

important period when this illustrious villain was elevating himself by his crimes, and whose diabolical policy he had thus an opportunity of studying at leisure. In the midst of these grave occupations, his satiric gaiety did not forsake him; and it was at this period that he composed his comedies, his novel of *Belfagor*, and some stanzas and sonnets which are not deficient in poetical merit. He had a considerable share in directing the councils of the Republic, as to arming and forming its militia; and he assumed more pride to himself from this advice, which liberated the state from the yoke of the *Condottieri*, than from the fame of his literary works. The influence to which he owed his elevation in the Florentine Republic, was that of the free party which contested the power of the Medici, and at that time held them in exile. When the latter were recalled in 1512, Machiavelli was deprived of all his employs and banished. He then entered into a conspiracy against the usurpers, which was discovered, and he was put to the torture, but without wresting from him, by extreme agonies, any confession which could impeach either himself or those who had confided in his honour. Leo X., on his elevation to the pontificate, restored him to liberty. Machiavelli has not, in any of his writings, testified his resentment of the cruel treatment he experienced. He seems

to have concealed it at the bottom of his heart; but we easily perceive that torture had not increased his love of princes, and that he took a pleasure in painting them as he had seen them, in a work in which he feigned to instruct them. It was, in fact, after having lost his employs, that he wrote on history and politics, with that profound knowledge of the human heart which he had acquired in public life, and with the habit of unweaving, in all its intricacies, the political perfidies which then prevailed in Italy. He dedicated his treatise of the *Principe*, not to Lorenzo the Magnificent, as Boutterwek, by a strange anachronism, has stated, but to Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, the proud usurper of the liberties of Florence, and of the estates of his benefactor, the former Duke of Urbino, of the house of Rovere. Lorenzo thought himself profound when he was crafty, and energetic when he was cruel; and Machiavelli, in shewing, in his treatise of the *Principe*, how an able usurper, who is not restrained by any moral principle, may consolidate his power, gave to the duke instructions conformable to his taste. The true object, however, of Machiavelli could not be to secure on his throne a tyrant whom he hated, and against whom he had conspired. Nor is it probable that he only proposed to himself, to expose to the people the maxims of tyranny, in order to render them odious; for an universal experience had, at that time, made

them known throughout all Italy, and that diabolical policy, which Machiavelli reduced to a system, was, in the sixteenth century, that of all the states. There is, in his manner of treating the subject, a general feeling of bitterness against mankind, and a contempt of the human race, which induces him to address it in language adapted to its despicable and depraved condition. He applies himself to the interests, and selfish calculations of mankind, since they do not deserve an appeal to their enthusiasm and moral sense. He establishes principles in theory, which he knows his readers will reduce to practice; and he exhibits the play of the human passions with an energy and clearness which require no ornament.

The *Principe* of Machiavelli is the best known of his political works, but it is neither the most profound, nor the most considerable. His three books of discourses on the first Decade of Livy, in which he investigates the first causes of the power of the Romans, and the obstacles which have impeded other nations in a similar career, discover an extensive knowledge, a great perspicacity in judging of men, and a powerful talent of mind in abstracting and generalizing ideas. The most profound political observations, which have been written since this epoch, in any language, have been derived from these early meditations of Machiavelli. As in this

work he goes much more directly to his object, and as he did not write either for a tyrant or for a free people, but for every honest mind which loves to reflect on the destinies of nations, this book is, in consequence, more moral in principle, though containing lessons not less profound; nor has it incurred, on the part of the church or of society, the same anathema which some time after the death of Machiavelli was pronounced against his treatise of the *Principe*.

It was also at this period of his life that Machiavelli wrote his History of Florence, dedicated to Pope Clement VII., and in which he instructed the Italians in the art of uniting the eloquence of history with depth of reflection. He has attached himself, much less than his predecessors in the same line, to the narration of military events. But his work, as a history of popular passions and tumults, is a masterpiece, and Machiavelli has completed, by this noble example of his theories, his analysis of the human heart. He was again employed in public affairs by the Pope, to whom he dedicated his book, and was charged with the direction of the fortifications, when death deprived his country of his farther services, on the twenty-second day of June, 1527, three years before the termination of the Fiorentine Republic.

Machiavelli might have rendered himself illustrious as a comic writer, if he had not preferred

political fame. He has left three comedies, which, by the novelty of the plot, by the strength and vivacity of the dialogues, and by their admirable delineation of character, are far superior to all that Italy had then, or has, perhaps, since produced. We feel sensible, in perusing them, of the talent of the master who conceived them, of the elevation from which their author judges the beings whom he has depicted with so much truth, and of his profound contempt for all the duplicity and hypocrisy which he so faithfully exposes. Two monks in particular, a brother Timoteo, who appears in the two first, and a brother Alberico, protagonist of the third, are represented with a vivacity and accuracy which have left nothing to the invention of the author of the *Tartufe*. It is to be regretted, that public manners authorized, at that time, such an extreme license in theatrical representations, that it is impossible to give even an analysis of these comedies. His tale of *Belfagor*, or the devil, who takes refuge in hell to avoid a scold, has been translated into all languages, and remodelled in French by La Fontaine. His poems are more remarkable for vigour of thought, than for harmony of style, or grace of expression. Some are composed of historical facts versified, and others, of satirical or burlesque fragments. But the pleasantries of the author are generally mingled with gall, and when he indulges his humour, it is

always in derision of the human race. It was thus that he wrote the Carnival Songs, to be recited by different troops of masks; each dance having a song or an ode, appropriated to its character and to its disguise. In the streets of Florence there were successively seen, on the triumphant cars, despairing lovers, ladies, the spirits of the blest, hermits, fruit-sellers, and quacks. They were connected by a kind of dramatic action, but Machiavelli contrived that they should be preceded by a chorus of demons; and we seem to recognize the writer of the *Principe*, in the morose manner in which he introduces this annual and popular feast. The following are the opening stanzas:

Driven from the mansions of immortal bliss,
Angels no more, the fate
Of pride was ours.
Yet claim we here, in this
Your rude and ravaged state,
More torn with faction and fierce powers
Of vengeance than our realms of hate,
The rule we lost in Heaven, o'er man below.*

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* Già fummo, or non siam più, spirti beati,
Per la superbia nostra
Dall' alto e sommo ciel tutti scacciati;
E 'n questa terra vostra
Abbiam preso 'l governo,
Perche quì si dimostra
Confusione e duol più che 'n inferno.

Famine, war, blood, fierce cold, and fiercer fire,
Lo! on your mortal heads,
These vials pour our hands that never tire:
And we, while the glad season spreads
The feast and dance, are with you now,
And must with you remain,
To foster grief and pain,
And plague you with fresh woes, and crimes that bring forth woe.

Some similitude may, perhaps, be remarked between Machiavelli and a man of this time, Pietro Aretino, whose name has acquired an infamous celebrity. Those who are not acquainted with the works of either the one or the other, regard them both with equal horror; the first, as the abettor of political crime, and the other, as having made a boast of his impiety, immorality, and profligacy. A comparison, however, cannot be admitted between them. Aretino was a man of infamous character; Machiavelli was, at the worst, only a culpable writer. Such, however, was the power of wit, and the favour shewn to poets, in the sixteenth century, that Charles V. Francis I., and the greatest men of the age, loaded

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E fame e guerra, e sangue e ghiaccio e foco
Sopra ciascun mortale
Abbiam messo nel mondo a poco a poco;
E'in questo carnovale
Vegniamo a star con voi,
Perche di ciascun male
Stati siamo e sarem principio noi.

Aretino with honours, and admitted him to their intimacy. An acknowledged friend of Leo X. and Clement VII., he was recommended to Paul III. by his son, the Duke of Parma, as deserving of a cardinal's hat, and had nearly attained that distinction, on the death of Paul, from his successor Julius III. He composed, during a considerably long life, (1492 to 1557) a great number of works, which are scarcely read at the present day. Some of these owed their reputation to their extreme licentiousness; others, to the caustic satire with which he attacked his powerful enemies; many, which were purchased at an extraordinary price by reigning sovereigns, are filled with the most base and degrading flatteries; and others, in no small number, are devotional pieces, which the author, an enemy to every religious faith and to all morals, wrote only because they brought him a larger sum of money. Notwithstanding this profligacy of mind and heart, Aretino received from his contemporaries the epithet of *Il Divino*. Possessed of assurance of every description, he adopted this title himself, repeated it on all occasions, and attached it to his signature as a person attaches a title to his name, or takes an addition to his arms. His life was sullied by every species of vice. His enemies, who found they could not wound the honour of a man who professed to have none, were obliged to have recourse to personal chastisement, which, in con-

sequence, he frequently underwent. At other times, he drew on himself more serious attacks. At Rome, a Bolognese gentleman struck him with his poniard, and lamed him for life. Pietro Strozzi, a marshal of France, against whom he had written some satirical pieces, threatened to have him assassinated in his bed; and the unfortunate Aretino shut himself up in his house, in inexpressible terror, and thus led a prisoner's life, until Strozzi had quitted Italy. Tintoretto, whom he had attacked with his accustomed virulence, accidentally meeting him near his house, and feigning ignorance of what he had written, told him that he had long wished for an opportunity of painting his portrait. He led him into his house, placed him on a chair, and suddenly presenting a pistol, advanced against him in a menacing attitude. "How now, Giacomo!" cried the terrified poet. "I am only taking your measure;" gravely answered the painter; and added, in the same tone, "I find you just four and a half pistol lengths." He then bade him instantly depart, an injunction which Aretino lost no time in obeying. It seemed, indeed, probable that he would have died either by the dagger or bodily chastisement, but he was reserved for a lighter death. He had some sisters at Venice, whose lives were as dissolute as his own. A person was one day recounting to him some of their amours, and he found them so comic, that he threw himself back

with violence in his chair. The chair fell backwards, his head was struck against the marble floor, and he died instantaneously, at the age of sixty-five.

The dramatic pieces of Aretino are the only works of his which can be said to have contributed to the advancement of letters in Italy; and it must be allowed that they are sometimes singularly attractive. In spite of all the disgust which the character of the author inspires; in spite of the effrontery with which, even in these comedies, he by turns sets himself above all the laws of decency in speaking of others, and those of modesty in speaking of himself; in spite of the gross faults in the conduct, and, almost always, of the want of interest in his characters, of perspicuity in the plot, and life in the action; we still find in his comedies a genuine dramatic talent, an originality, and often a gaiety, rarely met with in the early dramatic writers of Italy. Aretino probably owed his merit in great part to the absence of all imitation. He had neither the Greek nor Latin models before his eyes; he depicted human nature merely as he saw it, with all its vices and all its deformity, in a corrupted age; and, inasmuch as, like Aristophanes, he confined himself to the manners of his own time, he bears a greater resemblance to the Athenian dramatist than they who have taken him for their immediate model. In his comedies,

Aretino makes continual allusions to local circumstances; he paints undisguisedly the vices of the great as well as those of the people; and, at the same time that he mingles his satires with the lowest flattery, in order to procure for himself the protection of the great, or to remunerate them for the money he had obtained from them, he always preserves the picture of the general dissoluteness of manners, and the loose principles of the age, with singular truth and vivacity of colouring. From no other source can we obtain a more correct insight into that abandonment of all morals, honour, and virtue, which marked the sixteenth century. This age, so resplendent in literary glory, prepared at the same time the corruption of taste and of genius, of sentiment and of imagination, in destroying all that Italy had hitherto preserved of her ancient laws.

As we are compelled to pass over many illustrious authors, lest we should fatigue the reader by a barren enumeration of names, we shall conclude this list by a short notice of Teofilo Folengi, better known by the name of Merlino Coccajo. He was the inventor of the macaronic poetry, a species not less below the burlesque, than the *Bernesque* is above it. It is difficult to say whether these poems are Italian or Latin. The words and phrases are chosen from the most vulgar of the low Italian dialects; but the terminations are Latin, as is also the measure of the verse;

and the wit consists in lending to a composition and to ideas already burlesque, the language and the blunders of an ignorant scholar. This ridiculous style, supported by great vivacity, but often by pleasantries of very bad taste, had a prodigious success. Merlino Coccajo had many imitators; and macaronic verses have been written, formed of Latin and French, as his partook of Latin and Italian. The induction of the physician, in the *Malade Imaginaire*, is in this macaronic language. Folengi was born in the state of Mantua, and was a Benedictine monk, but escaped from his convent to follow his mistress. After a lapse of eleven years, spent in an irregular life, Folengi returned to his convent in 1526, and sought pardon for his errors in the composition of religious poems; in one of which, amongst others, in octave verse, on the life of Christ, we find considerable strength and elegance. There are also beauties in some passages of his macaronic verses, but it requires no small degree of courage to look for them.

We shall not speak at length of Baldassare Castiglione, the celebrated author of the *Cortegiano*, who exhibits in his verses both grace and sensibility; of Francesco Maria Molza of Modena, whose whole life was consecrated to love and the Muses, (1487—1544), and whom many critics have placed in the first rank of the lyric poets of the age; of Giovanni Mauro, a burlesque

poet, a friend and imitator of Berni; nor of Nicolo Franco, who, after having been brought up in the school of Aretino, had a furious quarrel with him, but attacked at the same time, with not less effrontery than his rival, both the government and public morals, in such a manner that Pius V., to put an effectual stop to his pasquinades, caused him to be hanged in 1569. Nor shall we pause to notice the Latin poets of this period, Sadoleti, Fracastoro, Pontano, and Vida, all of whom, by the purity of their language, by the elegance of their taste, and often by their classic genius, have approached the authors of antiquity whom they had taken for models. The greater part of these have written poems on didactic subjects. This kind of composition appears, in fact, to suit better than any other with authors who submitted their genius to prescribed rules, and who, wishing to restore a nation and a literature which would not harmonize with their own age and manners, have in their poems studied more the form than the substance. Nor shall we further speak of several distinguished historians of this epoch, Giovio, Nardi, and Nerli; nor of a man more celebrated and universally read, Francesco Guicciardini, whose history is quoted, even at the present day, as a school of politics, and a model of judicious criticism. In works of this nature, the literary merit, that of expression, is only secondary. It is from their profoundness of

thought, and their vivacity, that we assign a rank to historians; and, in order to pass an opinion on Guicciardini, we should be obliged to go beyond the bounds which we have prescribed to ourselves, on a subject already too extensive in itself.

We shall conclude this review of Italian literature of the sixteenth century, by some remarks on the progress of the comic drama. This branch of the dramatic art, which arose at the beginning of the age, if it was not brought to perfection, had at least rapidly advanced. The first pieces were little more than pedantic copies of the Latin comedy. They were represented at the expense of the Courts, before learned audiences. But at the end of a little time, although we do not know the precise period, troops of mercenary comedians possessed themselves of these dramas, and recited them before the public, who paid for their seats. From that time, the taste of the public became a matter of greater importance to the actors and to the authors. It was no longer sufficient that a piece was made conformable to the rules which the critics pretended to have deduced from the ancients. It was also requisite that it should interest or amuse. Machiavelli and Pietro Aretino had shown how laughter might be excited by the delineation of modern manners and vices. The example of Terence was gradually neglected, and a crowd of

authors undertook, with less erudition, indeed, but with more vivacity, to entertain the public. The most remarkable amongst them was Anton Maria Grassini, of Florence, surnamed Il Lasca, (the name of a fish), who endeavoured to give to his native drama manners and rules entirely national, and who overwhelmed with ridicule both the pedants and the Petrarchists. He ridiculed, in the first, the hard and starched imitation of the ancients; in the second, their Platonic love, the devotion to their mistressos, and the tender mysticism which rendered all their lyric poetry equally insipid and affected. A great number of comic authors followed in the footsteps of Lasca; Giovanni Battista Gelli, Angelo Firenzuola, Francesco Dambra, Salviati, Caro, and many others. Leontius Allacci, in his Dramaturgy, enumerates more than a thousand comedies composed in Italian in the sixteenth century; and Riccoboni assures us, that between the periods of 1500 and 1736, more than five thousand were printed. But amidst this prodigious number of writers, Italy does not boast a single great comic genius. If the early authors of this class were justly reproached with pedantry, those who followed were equally chargeable with ignorance and negligence. Content to draw laughter from the populace by their coarse and unpolished jests, they renounced the art of disposing and unravelling the plot, and of giving a true delineation of character.

These comedies, so numerous and so indifferent, almost all arose in the bosom of the academies, and were there represented. Italy was thronged in this age with literary societies, which took the title of Academies, and which assumed at the same time fanciful and absurd names. Among other exercises of the mind, the composition and recitation of comedies, with a view of restoring the drama of the ancients, was one of the earliest occupations of these literary societies. To this object their efforts were principally directed; and, as the performance of a comedy was at the same time amusing and profitable, there was scarcely a small town where an academy was not found, with the sole view of giving theatrical performances to the public. It is in this manner that we must explain that singular and rapid multiplication of academies, so remarkable in the history of Italy, and of which no one seems to have discovered the real object. Even to the present day, nearly all the theatres of Italy belong to academies. The title and academical privileges pass from father to son, and are sometimes sold. Since the academicians have given up performing themselves, they hire out their theatres to strolling companies; and we are surprised to find a literary title given to an association devoted to pleasure and to profit.

Those wandering companies, who at the present day occupy the theatres of Italy, also took their rise in the sixteenth century, but in an ob-

scure manner, and in a way which literature has not traced. This arose from the mountebanks and empirics attempting to represent, on their stages, farces of a greater length ; and what was at first only an extempore dialogue between a quack and his fellow, assumed, by degrees, the form of a comedy. The pieces were not written beforehand, but a certain character was assigned to each actor, as well as his country, and a provincial dialect. It was this which gave rise to the invention of the masks of Pantaloon, the Doctor, and Harlequin and Columbine, who, always preserving the same characters, found them more easy to support. We shall again refer to these extempore comedies, which were called *Comedie dell' Arte*, and to the masks peculiar to the Italian theatre, when we arrive at the period when they exercised a greater influence on the national taste. Their first appearance in the literary world is marked by farces in the Paduan dialect, which Angelo Beolco Ruzzante, of Padua, published in 1530.*

* It may gratify the curiosity of the reader to present him with a specimen of these old harlequinades, in their original dialect, which is exceedingly grotesque. *Il Tascho, Atto* 1.

SITON. An frello stetu chi ?

DALDURA. Sea stesse chi, critu que andera via con a vago?

SIT. No, a digo, se ti e chi, via ?

DALD. A no son za oltra 'l mare, siando chi.

It is proper to notice, at least by a single word, the commencement of the existence of Pantaloon and Harlequin, to whom three succeeding centuries have been indebted for a fund of inexhaustible buffoonery.

Sit. Favella un puo con mi.

Dald. Ste vuo que a favella mi, tasi ti.

Sit. Haristu vezu un certo huomo, rizzo, griso, con una mala ciera, el nazo rebeccò in sù, con le mascelle grande, color fumegaizzo, barba chiara, e guardaura scura?

Dald. E lo me stò apiccò questu? al pora sier vezu su una forca.

Sit. El la mierita ben.

Dald. El no passerae de chi via, que 'l no ghe va per sta via, nome chi se và a insantare a Roma.

Sit. A ponto là se spazia la so mercandaria.

Dald. Que elo mercadante da perdoni, o da giubilei questu?

Sit. A dighe de femene, e si ne mena via una.—&c.

CHAPTER XVI.

On the Decline of Italian Literature in the Seventeenth Century: The age of the *Seicentisti.**

It is sometimes found that events, which overthrow the fortunes of whole nations, are more rapid in their career than the lives of individuals, and that a whole people may be deprived of their energy, their glory, and all that constituted their character, while the nobler principles, which they have forfeited, still continue to animate the breasts of many of the citizens. They, in whom the seeds of genius and talent, fostered by favourable circumstances, have early sprung up, will not be easily deterred from their cultivation, even by public calamities, which deprive their country of its independence, and extinguish the spirit of the people. Indeed, men have often attained to a high degree of literary eminence, at a period when the downfall of political institutions seemed to discourage the noblest views, and to repress

* The seventeenth century is called by the Italians *Mille Seicento*, or *Seicento*; and the writers, who flourished during that period, are generally termed *Seicentisti*.

the efforts of the human mind. Thus, notwithstanding the fatal revolutions which ushered in the close of the fifteenth century, the succeeding age was distinguished by a greater number of celebrated characters, in Italy, than, perhaps, had ever appeared in any other nation during an equal period of time. Had the calamities of that country ceased, and could Italy, after a war of half a century, have been restored to the situation which she held towards the close of the year fifteen hundred, these great characters would have maintained that national excellence, in all the fine arts and in every species of intellectual pursuits, which had been handed down to them by their illustrious predecessors. Italy might again have arisen, with fresh vigour, from the grave of her renown, and we should not have witnessed the blank, which we discover, in the annals of the human mind. But the unfortunate events which occurred at the commencement of the sixteenth century, were hardly so fatal to the progress of letters as the death-like repose which followed. An universal and organized system of oppression succeeded to the calamities of war; and enfeebled Italy produced, during a century and a half, only a race of cold and contemptible imitators, tamely following in the paths of their predecessors; or of false and affected originals, who mistook an inflated style for grandeur of sentiment, antithesis

for eloquence, and witty conceits for a proof of brilliant powers. This was the reign of corrupted taste; a taste which strove, by a profusion of ornament, to disguise the want of native talent, and which maintained its authority from the time of the imprisonment of Tasso, until the appearance of Metastasio in the zenith of his fame.*

Although the reigns of Charles V. and of Philip II. appear among the most brilliant in history, for the triumphs of the human mind, in the career both of letters and of art, we must not forget that it was also the fatal period when chains were forged to subdue the intellect of mankind, and when genius, arrested in its course, was compelled to retrace its steps. These monarchs, who reaped the advantage of the munificent labours of their predecessors, failed to scatter, in their turn, the seeds of cultivation; and, as the harvest of the human mind requires half a century to bring it to perfection, every province subjected to their dominion was, after the expiration of that time, doomed to the general fate of sterility. It is almost impossible to convey an idea of the suspicious yet lethargic nature of the Spanish government under the three Philips, (Philip II., III., and IV.) over nearly one half of Italy; embracing the Milanese, Naples, Sicily, and Sardinia. It

* From 1580 to 1730.

extended likewise, with scarcely less authority, over the territories of the Pope, and over the dukedoms of Italy, which had occasion to solicit its protection. Enormous duties, unequally and absurdly exacted, destroyed commerce, and exhausted and depopulated the country; while governors enriched themselves by cruel and overwhelming extortions, which excited an universal feeling of hatred and contempt, against the blind infatuation and injustice of such a system. The course of interminable war, in which the court of Madrid persisted during the whole period that the house of Austria wielded the sceptre of Spain, had drained the finest provinces of their wealth and population, and left them open to the annual depredations of the Turks, to the invasion of the French, to the masked wars of the Piedmontese, and to the residence of German and Spanish troops, even more to be dreaded than the enemy. All free inquiry was considered in the light of an attack upon the government; while the liberty of the press was rigidly prohibited to its subjects, as well as the least discussion relating to public affairs. Nor were such coercive measures confined to the circulation of obnoxious writings. All persons accused of having prohibited books in their possession were subjected to the severest civil and religious penalties. In order to render this oppressive system still more effectual, and to extend its sway over the mind, the Inquisition

was resorted to, as a final means of perpetuating the despotism already established. Not that this tribunal was instituted with a view to the interests of religion, or of permitting, at least to the clergy, some portion of the liberty of which the people were deprived; for at no time had greater persecution been experienced than by the priests who adhered to the Council of Trent, at the hands of the Viceroys of Naples, towards the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century. The policy pursued by the court of Madrid was, to introduce the doctrines of the Council into other states, in order to enfeeble and distract them; while, setting no bounds to its authority, it would never consent to recognize them in its own. Hence the perpetual inconsistency we every where observe between its professions and its conduct; and thus persecution was rendered still more intolerable, because its object was misunderstood, and its limits could never be foreseen. Abuses only seemed to be respected; civil liberty was openly invaded; and the popular rights in every point betrayed. Men, suspected of entertaining liberal views, no less than of overt actions, were subjected to cruel and atrocious punishments, which were inflicted rather out of torture and revenge, than in the course of justice and the laws, which were, indeed, no longer administered. Churches and monasteries served as a safe asylum for guilt; while

the viceroys, governors of cities, and other agents of the government, took hired bandits into their service, remunerating their deeds of outrage and assassination, committed by their authority, with spoil and impunity. Even convents scrupled not to make use of the same weapons; and, in the conspiracy of the monk Campanella, the people witnessed, not without astonishment, the priests of Calabria arming with their own hands many thousands of banditti,* who encamped in military order before the towns, so that it required a large escort to pass between Naples and Caserta, or Aversa. Such a state of anarchy, together with the universal hatred borne by the Italians towards the Spaniards, led to repeated efforts to free themselves from their yoke. The insurrections at Naples and at Messina in 1647, and the ensuing year, rescued nearly the whole of the Two Sicilies

* Frà Tomaso Campanella was the author of many eccentric productions relating to philosophy and magic. He organized a conspiracy among the monks, with the authority of several bishops, for the purpose of establishing a republic in Calabria. Three hundred priests became a party to it, and fifteen hundred bandits were, in a short time, put under arms. The appearance of the Turkish fleet, commanded by Murat Reys, under whose auspices the new republic was placed, was fixed upon as the signal of revolt, when it should arrive off Stilo, Campanella's native place. It came in sight on the fourteenth of September, 1599, but he had been arrested, by order of the Viceroy, fifteen days before, and his companions were put to death with almost every variety of punishment.

from the sway of Spain; nor were they again recovered, until recourse was had to treachery where open force had failed. The Milanese, exposed to the continual passage of troops destined for the wars in France and Germany, did not dare openly to revolt; but the public discontent, and the fixed determination of the people to shake off the ignominious yoke, were the foundations of the power of the house of Savoy, which secretly aggrandized itself at the expense of the Austrian government.

The Republic of Genoa remained, during the whole of this age, in absolute subjection to the court of Spain. The Pope, whom the religious wars of Germany retained in the same interests and the same subjection, was punished for his rebellious conduct, whenever he attempted, as he had the temerity to do in a few instances, to lighten the weight of the burden imposed upon him by that grasping court. The Republic of Venice alone succeeded in preserving its liberty and neutrality, purchased at the price of the most scrupulous political silence and apathy. Nor did the Holy Inquisition more effectually repress all freedom of opinion in Spain, than the political inquisition, fearful of giving umbrage to its more powerful neighbours by any inconsiderate action of its citizens, effected the same object, in Venice. The Italian Dukes endeavoured to compensate for the loss of their

political importance, by all the pleasures and luxuries of a southern court. The princes of Tuscany alone preserved that respect for science and the arts, which had shed such lustre on the name of the Medici. They promoted the study of natural philosophy, of painting, and of sculpture; pursuits which are least likely to awaken the suspicions of a jealous government. The academy of Cimento, and Cardinal Leopold's fine gallery, were the ornaments of Florence during the seventeenth century; but, from the time that Cosmo I. thought it necessary to appease the courts of Rome and of Madrid, by delivering up his confidential friend* to the Inquisition, freedom of opinion had been as effectually banished from Florence as from the rest of Italy. Since the close of the sixteenth century, the house of Este had been deprived of the duchy of Ferrara, reverting to the church, by the failure of the legitimate branch; and though its illegitimate successors retained Modena and Reggio, they seemed to have lost, with their chief dominions, that enthusiasm for letters which had hitherto constituted their proudest fame. The house of Gonzaga, so cruelly punished by the pillage and massacre of Mantua, in the year 1630, for having been at-

* Pietro Carnesecchi was beheaded, and his body afterwards burnt at Rome, on the third of October, 1567, on a charge of inclining towards the reformed opinions of the times.

tached to the interests of France, sought to bury the remembrance of its calamities in a system of depravity, unparalleled, perhaps, in the history of royal houses, and which caused its downfall at the close of the same century. The Farnese family, raised to the sovereignty of Parma and Piacenza in the preceding age, produced only one great character, in the Prince Alessandro, the rival of Henry IV., who, however, never revisited his dominions, after leaving them to take the command of the armies of Philip II. In his successors, we enumerate only cruel and voluptuous tyrants, of weak and indolent capacities. As subjects of applause, however, are eagerly sought after to illustrate the lives of sovereigns, we find them commended for the encouragement they afforded to the Italian Opera, which then first came into notice. The heroic character of the princes of Savoy, alone, distinguished above that of the other despicable potentates of Italy, confers lustre on the annals of the seventeenth century. The ruinous wars, however, in which they were constantly engaged, endangered their political existence, and left them as little leisure as means for the promotion of literature and of the arts.

Such was the state of Italy during the same period that the reigns of Louis XIII. and XIV. added so much to the power and reputation of France. But we ought not to be surprised to

find the seventeenth century disgraced by universal degeneracy in Italy, and the name of *Seicentisti* applied, even amongst the Italians themselves, in the way of opprobrium. Under such a government, the corruption became general. It infected the principles and manners of the people, and added to the indolence and love of pleasures, so natural to the inhabitants of the South. We shall, however, briefly proceed to cite a few names of those, who, resisting the torrent of bad taste, still adhered to the excellent principles so long established, as well as of those who, by misapplying their talents, opened the way for a crowd of imitators in a false route, and gave that character of extravagance and bad taste to the seventeenth century, for which it is so peculiarly distinguished.

The effects of this perverted taste were first perceived during the latter part of the sixteenth century; the period closing with the observations contained in the preceding chapter. The poets, of whom we now proceed to give some account, may be said to belong equally to both ages, both in point of time and in style of composition. The first of these who attracts our notice is Battista Guarini, who has long been ranked as one of the Italian classics. He was born at Ferrara, in the year 1537, and sprang from the same family which, in the fifteenth century, gave birth to two other distinguished writers. He attached

himself to the court of Ferrara, about the same time with Tasso, who was seven years younger than Guarini. He was employed by Alfonso II. in several embassies; and, on the death of his royal patron, transferred himself to the court of Florence, and afterwards to that of Urbino. He died at Venice, in the year 1612. The poem of the *Pastor Fido*, on which his reputation now depends, was represented, for the first time, in 1585; when Tasso, whom he had imitated, was a prisoner in the hospital of St. Anne. Its success far surpassed what had been witnessed at the representation of the *Amyntas*, and this tribute to its superiority was not undeserved. A more spirited and dramatic composition was here brought before the public; uniting all the sweetness of the idyl with the tenderness of erotic poetry; while the pastoral charms, usually attributed to Arcadia, and the languishing repose of its amorous dreams, have a much greater portion of the fire and animation of real life. The action of this piece was also more complete and probable, of its kind, and more suited to theatrical exhibition; and the beauties of poetry and of language were at least as profusely scattered in it as in the *Amyntas*. Guarini modelled this mixed dramatic pastoral on that mythological plan of the opera, afterwards so skilfully adopted by Metastasio, but which will not, however, bear a very strict examination.

Arcadia, supposed, for more than a century, to have fallen under the displeasure of Diana, is annually compelled to sacrifice a young virgin; and, according to a mysterious oracle, the fatal penalty will be imposed

> "Till two of race divine be join'd by Love;
> And high devotion of a faithful swain
> Expiate one woman's long and fatal error."*

Only two beings of celestial descent, however, Silvio and Amaryllis, are to be found in Arcadia, one of whom is sprung from Pan, the other from Hercules. The Arcadians are in hopes that their union may accomplish the meaning of the oracle, and they had been already betrothed to each other. But Silvio, insensible to love, delights only in the chase; ridiculing the charms of Amaryllis, as well as of Dorinda, who is passionately attached to him. Mirtillo, another shepherd, poor and of obscure birth, loves Amaryllis, and his affections are returned. Corisca, indulging a secret regard for Mirtillo, wishes, from a motive of jealousy, to betray Amaryllis, exposing her to the most injurious suspicions of having suffered herself to be seduced; and the shepherdesses of Arcadia being subjected to vestal laws, she was consequently adjudged to die.

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* Che duo semi del ciel congiunga Amore;
E di donna infedel l' antico errore
L' alta pietà d' un *Pastor Fido* ammende.
Act. I. sc. 2.

Mirtillo, however, resolves to devote himself for her; and he is about to be sacrificed in her place. The sacrificial knife is raised; but at that moment, his foster-father comes forward to prove that he is the officiating priest's own son, the brother of Silvio, and descended from the gods. The oracle is now fulfilled; two hearts of celestial origin are thus united in love; and the devotion of Mirtillo has merited the title of a faithful shepherd. By these nuptials, Arcadia is delivered from its annual tribute of blood. Silvio is softened by the charms of Dorinda, whom he happens to have unintentionally wounded in the chase; even the repentant Corisca meets with pardon; and the general happiness is complete.

Such are the materials for a plot, extended by Guarini into more than six thousand lines; and we can scarcely, at this period, conceive how so long a piece could have been represented. From the language of the dialogue, the trifling thoughts, and common places, and the flatness of the action, we easily gather that Guarini formed no idea of any impatience in the spectators, nor thought himself obliged to awaken their curiosity, and to rivet their attention to the story. Nor was he acquainted with the art, so important in the eyes of modern French critics, of connecting the different scenes, and of assigning probable motives for the appearance and disappearance of the persons of

the drama. Each scene is, for the most part, a separate act, with very little reference, either in action, or in time and place, to that which immediately precedes it; and this want of consistency, as a whole, throws an air of singular coldness over the first act, consisting of five scenes, which unconnectedly follow each other in the manner of five different plots. The versification of the *Pastor Fido* appears to me even more pleasing than that of the *Amyntas*. Guarini gave exquisite grace and harmony to his verses; passing, without effort or abruptness, from the *versi sciolti* to measures the most varied and complex. Indeed, no prose could have conveyed his sentiments more accurately; while no species of lyric poetry, in the ode or in the canzone, display a happier combination of rhymes, or a greater variety of feet, both regular and free. The piece is, perhaps, more deficient in spirit than in poetry; the sentiments are often trite; and the author attempts to disguise his want of originality by frequent affectation and conceit.* Its chief attraction, and

* We have a specimen of the *Concetti*, on the first appearance of Mirtillo on the scene, act I. sc. 2; but, excepting the two first lines, the remainder is very pleasing:

Cruda *Amarilli!* che col nome ancora
D'*amare*, ahi lasso! *amaramente* insegni;
Amarilli del candido ligustro
Più candida e più bella,
Ma dell' aspido sordo

which very much contributed to its success, is the poetical exhibition of the passion of love, the source of the various incidents throughout the entire action of the piece, throwing its voluptuous charm, equally over the poet,, the actors, and the spectators. It has, indeed, more than once been criticized, and not without reason, on the ground of its moral tendency: but, if we grant that such a scenic representation of the passion be admissible, developed in its most ardent and impetuous character, Guarini must then be allowed to have succeeded, almost inimitably, in communicating the feeling to his audience and to his readers. He presented the lyric and erotic poets of his country with an example, which long maintained its influence over their taste. In his most moving situations, Guarini has often con-

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E più sorda, e più fera, e più fugace;
Poichè col dir t' offendo,
Io mi morrò tacendo:
Ma grideran per me le piaggie e i monti,
E questa selva, a cui
Sì spesso il tuo bel nome
Di risonare insegno;
Per me piangendo i fonti,
E mormorando i venti,
Diranno i miei lamenti;
Parlerà nel mio volto
La pietate e 'l dolore:
E se fia muta ogni altra cosa, al fine
Parlerà il mio morire,
E ti dirà la morte il mio martire.

trived to bestow upon his characters the language of truth and nature; and Voltaire remarks, with justice, that he is among the first dramatic writers, who affected their audience to tears.* Guarini has left, also, some sonnets and madrigals, in which he has carried his false taste to a much greater excess than in the *Pastor Fido.*

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* Of this kind is the speech of Amaryllis, when, accused of being dishonoured, she is conducted to the temple. *Act IV. sc. 5.*

Padre mio, caro padre,
E tu ancor m' abbandoni?
Padre d' unica figlia,
Così morir mi lasci, e non m' aiti?
Almen non mi negar gli ultimi baci.
Ferirà pur duo petti un ferro solo:
Verserà pur la piaga
Di tua figlia, il tuo sangue.
Padre, un tempo sì dolce e caro nome,
Ch' invocar non soleva indarno mai,
Così le nozze fai
Della tua cara figlia?
Sposa il mattino, e vittima la sera?

I shall, to this, add an example of a different style, as beautiful in its way. It is a chorus of hunters and shepherds, extolling the fame of Silvio for delivering the country from the depredations of a terrific wild boar. *Act IV. sc. 6.*

PASTORI.

O fanciul glorioso,
Che sprezzi per altrui la propria vita!
Questo è il vero cammino
Di poggiare a virtute;
Perocchè innanzi a lei,
La fatica e il sudor poser gli Dei.

The long life of Gabriello Chiabrera distinguished the close of the sixteenth, and the first half of the following century. He was born at Savona, on the eighth day of June, 1552, and he died in the year 1637. His life, of which he has himself given us an account, does not abound with incidents. He spent his time partly at Rome, and partly at Savona, wholly immersed in the study of the ancient authors, and in the com-

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Chi vuol goder degli agi
Soffra prima i disagi:
Nè da riposo infruttuoso e vile
Ch' il faticar aborre,
Ma da fatica che virtù precorre
Nasce il vero riposo.

CACCIATORI.

O fanciul glorioso,
Vera stirpe d'Alcide,
Che fere già si mostruose ancide!

PASTORI.

O fanciul glorioso,
Per cui le ricche piaggie,
Prive già di cultura e di cultori,
Han ricovrati i lor fecondi onori!
Và pur sicuro, e prendi
Omai, bifolco, il neghittoso aratro;
Spargi il gravido seme,
E il caro frutto in sua stagione attendi.
Fiero piè, fiero dente,
Non fia più che tel tronchi o tel calpesti;
Nè sarai per sostegno
Della vita, a te grave, altrui noioso.

position of his own voluminous works. It was his misfortune to be alternately banished from both these places, by affairs of honour quite of an Italian character, in which it appears that he assassinated both his adversaries. We learn from a notice of his life, written by himself, and prefixed to his works, that, it so happened that, without offering the slightest provocation, he was insulted by a Roman gentleman; for which affront having revenged himself, he was constrained to leave Rome, and unable to obtain a pardon, during ten years. Having had likewise another affair, in his native place, in which he was slightly wounded, he again revenged himself with his own hand, and was banished for many months. He married when he was fifty years of age, but had no children. He lived to the advanced age of eighty-six, and without ever having suffered any serious indisposition. Born in easy circumstances, he was enabled to indulge his inclination for travel. Few writers have surpassed him in the extent of their productions. He left behind him five epic poems, in the manner of Ariosto; innumerable dramatic pieces for musical accompaniments, the earliest specimens extant of the opera; together with a number of treatises on the Passion of our Saviour, and many other religious productions, in prose. But his lyric pieces, by which he acquired so great a reputation, and which are printed separately

from the rest, in three volumes, far exceed his other works. In these, Chiabrera was the first who ventured beyond the prescribed forms and limits, derived by the Italians from the Provençals, respecting lyrical composition. Exonerating himself from the painful trammels of the measured sonnet and the canzone, he boldly aimed at catching the true scope and spirit of the Pindaric and the Anacreontic ode. Possessing a very exact ear, he quickly discovered the kind of harmony best adapted to Italian verse. By dividing the strophe into short lines, and by varying it according to the rules of prosody, although not with the same nice distinctions as the ancients, he was enabled to introduce into the versification of his odes a very fine and agreeable variety. He gave them a flow of metre, which enabled him to drop the very frequent recurrence of rhyme; and he also succeeded admirably in varying his versification, and adapting it to the opposite subjects of love, of pleasure, of flattery, and religion, on all of which he treated. Many of his odes were addressed to princes, who merited the poet's enthusiasm as little as they excite our own. The vigour, the vivacity, and the inspired character of his genius, certainly carried Italian poetry to a very high pitch of excellence. No writer, says Tiraboschi, better knew how to transfuse the graces of Anacreon, and the daring flights of Pindar, into Italian verse, than Chiabrera;

no one displayed more of the audacity of his art; of that springy strength and inspired ardour, which breathed in the language of elder Greece, and in the absence of which there is, indeed, no true poetry. Though his expressions are not always the most elegant, and his metaphorical language is somewhat too bold, yet the elevation of the thoughts, the vivacity of the images, and a certain divine enthusiasm, the very soul of lyrical composition, leave us little inclination to dwell upon his faults.

Contemporary with Chiabrera, flourished Giovanni Battista Marini, the celebrated innovator on classic Italian taste, and who first seduced the poets of the seventeenth century into that laboured and affected style, which his own richness and vivacity of imagination were so well calculated to recommend. The most whimsical comparisons, pompous and overwrought descriptions, with a species of poetical punning and research, were soon esteemed, under his authority, as beauties of the very first order.

Marini was born at Naples, in the year 1569. When very young, he secretly withdrew from his father's house, in order to escape from the irksome study of the law, to which profession he was brought up by his father, who was himself an advocate. But his singular talents for poetry were already known, and had procured for him patrons

among the Neapolitan nobility. He found more at Rome, where he also met with Cardinal Cinzio Aldobrandini, who had placed, though late, the laurel crown upon the head of Tasso. He accompanied the Cardinal to the court of Turin, and upon being introduced by his new patron, his productions appeared to make a more favourable and lively impression than they had before done. His poetry, abounding in lively imagery, and sparkling with *concetti* and antitheses, attracted the attention of all those writers who, in their research after novelty and effect, failed to observe the just limits, even where they had attained to superior excellence in poetical composition. Marini's smoothness of style and versification, his force and vividness of description, and the voluptuous and striking display of the most delicate traits of passion, in which his genius was so inexhaustible, procured for him a reputation which he has ever since continued to enjoy. He was shortly placed at the head of a poetical party. His followers triumphantly proclaimed his excellence, above all others, in the abundant stores of his imagination, and in the generous ardour with which he gave free scope to the impulses of his genius; while his opponents attempted to maintain the purity of taste, characteristic of the preceding age, without exhibiting a single spark of its genius. These literary feuds were as keen as

they were obstinate, and bitter in proportion to the impossibility of indulging in any more serious subjects of controversy. Some species of intellectual discussion was absolutely requisite to a people like the Italians, who had lost even the shadow of civil and religious freedom; and the study of mythology was the only field left open to the enquiries of the human mind. Every nobler thought, every generous sentiment, was considered incompatible with the safety of the sovereign and the state. We no longer wonder, then, that such a subject acquired so much importance in their eyes. In a commendatory sonnet, addressed to a contemporary poet, Marini, enumerating the labours of Hercules, had confounded the Nemæan lion with the hydra of Lerna; and this was enough to excite the most violent outcry against him. One party of these literary gladiators attacked, while another defended him. Perhaps no question involving the dearest interests of mankind could have given birth to more discussion, and more voluminous works; no quarrels, derived from the most tragic sources, could have produced so many violent and outrageous libels. Nor did the parties confine themselves to this. Satirical poetry was not the only weapon they launched against each other. Murtola, Marini's poetical rival, aimed a musquet-shot at the leader of the innovating sect, as he turned the corner of a street in Turin; but, missing its

object, the ball struck one of the prince's courtiers walking at his side, who immediately fell. We are told that Marini endeavoured to obtain Murtola's pardon from the prince, and that his adversary, instead of evincing his gratitude on the occasion, brought an accusation before Charles Emanuel against Marini, stating that the poet had reflected on the prince's character, in one of his satiric poems. Marini was thrown into prison, while the alleged charge underwent examination; nor was he set at liberty, until he had satisfactorily proved that the obnoxious poem had been published at Naples, in his early youth, before he had had the honour of meeting with the Duke of Savoy, and that consequently he could not very well have drawn his portrait. On regaining his freedom, Marini went into France, where he obtained the patronage of Mary de' Medici, who conferred a considerable pension on him. There, he produced the most celebrated of his poems, entitled the *Adonis*. Its publication gave rise to a fresh literary contest in Italy. In his vindication, Marini retorted upon his adversaries with much rancour, and his followers were still more violent than himself. During the heat of the engagement, Marini made his last visit to Italy, where he was received with great applause. His entrance into Rome almost resembled a triumph. He thence pursued his journey to Naples, his native place, where he ended his days, in the year 1625.

Marini was a very voluminous writer. He left a great number of sonnets, eclogues, and idyls; canzoni, epithalamiums, panegyrics, and a series of epigrams intended for a gallery of portraits. I am only acquainted with his *Adonis*, and, I must confess, not very intimately so with the whole of it. The poem is written in twenty cantos, many of these consisting of no less than three hundred octave verses, and one of them of more than five hundred; so that it exceeds in length the great work of Ariosto. A slight view will suffice to give an idea of the peculiar excellencies and defects, which formerly procured for this poet such a distinguished reputation.

The *Adonis* of Marini is of a mixed epic and romantic character; and the subject is taken from the loves of Venus and Adonis. It opens at the moment that Cupid, incensed against his mother, wounds her with one of his arrows, inspiring her with a passion for the youthful shepherd, whom he conveys from the deserts of Arabia into the isle of Cyprus. But the poet, as if delighting rather in picturesque description, than in recounting events, treats each separate canto as if it were a short poem, to which he gives an appropriate title. Of this kind are *Felicity*, *The Palace of Love*, *Love's surprise*, *The Tale* (of Cupid and Psyche, an episode composing the fourth canto), *The Tragedy*, *The Garden*, &c. In his descriptions of the pleasures of love,

Marini scatters the flowers of his poetry with a profuse hand, over all imaginable situations and incidents. He overpowers us with the astonishing variety of his images, his sentiments, and his refinements upon tenderness and pleasure, on which he seems to have delighted to dwell. His style is remarkable for its harmony, and for a rich flow of passion and expression, which in the eighth canto is carried to its highest point. Nice feelings of morality and propriety, however, seldom restrain him in his descriptions, any more than the rules of sound taste and criticism, in the distribution of his work. The conclusion of his poem assumes quite a romantic cast. The jealousy of Mars and of a malicious fairy interrupts the loves of Venus. Adonis is torn from her side; but in vain the fairy tries to seduce his affections. He effects his liberty, and regains his Venus; when, his passion for the chase involving him in fresh perils, the poem closes with his death, and with the funeral rites celebrated over his tomb.

We cannot consider the Chevalier Marini—a title conferred upon him by Charles Emanuel,—as very fortunate in the selection of his subject. In itself, it is destitute of interest; as the gods, and more particularly those of the pagan world, awaken no sort of sympathy in mere mortals; while the poet, renouncing all keeping and probability, preserved too little nature, both in his incidents and descriptions. But Marini aspired

to no heroic wreaths; he revelled in the myrtle bowers. The poet of pleasure and of wit, he presents us with a gay series of enchanting pictures, but is by no means solicitous as to the manner in which it is arranged. In regard to wit and spirit, the poem is replete with all those sparkling graces, so much admired by his contemporaries. Plays upon words, endless antitheses, and striking images, together with every thing calculated to surprise or to bewilder his readers, admired before it is comprehended, and despised as false when understood, are the chief characteristics of his poetry.

Enjoying, for a period, the highest degree of popularity and poetic fame, Marini was extolled, during the seventeenth century, even above those writers whom we have been taught to consider as the classic authorities of Italy. The Spaniards, who imitated, and even went beyond him in his own eccentric career, held him in the highest estimation; while the French were scarcely less enthusiastic in his praise, the effects of which may be traced in their poetry up to the time of Rousseau, who has given a great number of Marini's verses in *The new Heloise.* I shall here select a few stanzas out of the eighteenth canto, entitled *La Morte,* containing a description of the chase in which Adonis was killed by the wild boar:

That soft white hand now hurls the threatening spear,
Straining each nerve, against the monster's side,
But, ah! in vain, to check his fierce career;
Harmless it flew, nor drew the crimson tide;
And stouter heart and stouter arm might fear
To urge the quivering point, he vainly tried,
Through that dark bristling shield; like some firm wall,
Or anvil, fix'd it stood; no red drops fall.

Adonis saw; his purple cheeks grew pale;
The startled blood flew to his throbbing breast;
Late he repents, late sees his bold hopes fail,
And doubts, and turns to fly, while onward prest
The terrors of his foe, that ever quail
Young hunters' hearts; sharp growl, erected crest,
And rapid pace, with eyes more fearful bright
Than meteors seen 'mid darkest clouds of night.

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* Con la tenera mano il ferro duro
Spinge contro il cinghial, quanto più pote;
Ma più robusto braccio e più securo
Penetrar non poria dov' ei percote;
L' acuto acciar, com' habbia un saldo muro
Ferito, overo una scabrosa cote,
Com' habbia in un ancudine percosso,
Torna senza trar fuor stilla di rosso.

Quando ciò mira Adon, riede in se stesso,
Tardi pentito, et meglio si consiglia,
Pensa a lo scampo suo, se gli è permesso,
E teme, e di fuggir partito piglia;
Perche gli scorge, in riguardarlo appresso
Quel fiero lume entro l' horrende ciglia
Ch' ha il ciel talhor, quando trà nubi rotte
Con tridente di foco apre la notte.

Canto 18. *st.* 92.

These lines are calculated to convey an idea of the lofty harmony of verse, and the picturesque powers of a poet, who, in an age of greater freedom, might have so far counteracted his peculiarities, and restrained his imagination by models of a purer taste, as to have ranked amongst the most distinguished poets of Europe. The boar is supposed to be in pursuit of Adonis; and Marini, in one of those whimsical flights of imagination, in which he so much loved to indulge at the expense of good taste, divests the enraged animal of its natural ferocity, as if suddenly enchanted with the beauty of the young hunter, who is flying for his life.*

Adonis attempts once more to repulse the monster with his dart; but he is stretched upon the plain; and the ferocious animal repeatedly attacking him, pierces his tender side with grievous wounds.

Soft-breathing sighs, sweet languor, sweetest hue
Of pallid flowers, Death's ensigns beautiful,
With Love's triumphant smiles, no terrors threw
O'er his bright face and form, and eyes late full
Of amorous fires. Though quench'd those orbs of blue,
Their beauty doth not yet look cold or dull:

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* Col mostaccio crudel baciar gli volle
Il fianco, che vincea le nevi istesse,
E credendo lambir l' avorio molle,
Del fier dente la stampa entro v' impresse:
Vezzi fur gli urti, atti amorosi e gesti
Non le 'nsegnò natura altri che questi.

Shining, as Love and Death young brothers were,
And sported midst those graces, cold as fair.
Cool fountains shed their urns, warm-gushing tears,
Proud oaks and pines low bend their mournful heads,
And Alpine height, and forest murmuring hears,
And pours a flood of sorrow o'er the meads.
Now weep the Nymphs, and Dryads weep with fears
For Venus now; her lost Adonis bleeds;
While spring and mountain-haunting Nymphs lament;
Through springs and mountains is a sighing sent.*

Among Marini's innumerable imitators, Claudio Achillini† and Geronimo Preti are the first to claim our attention. Few writers ever attained to so high a degree of reputation during their lives, and few have afterwards sunk into more complete oblivion. Italy, at that time, languished under

* O come dolce spira e dolce langue,
O qual dolce pallor gl' imbianca il volto!
Horribil nò, che nell' horror, nel sangue
Il riso col piacer stassi raccolto.
Regna nel ciglio ancor voto ed essangue
E trionfa negli occhi amor sepolto.
E chiusa e spenta l' una e l' altra stella
Lampeggia, e morte in si bel viso e bella.

Arsero di pietate i freddi fonti,
S' intenerir le dure querce e i pini;
E scaturir da le frondose fronti
Lagrimosi ruscelli i gioghi Alpini;
Pianser le ninfe, ed ulular da monti
E da profondi lor gorghi vicini,
Driadi e Napee stempraro in pianto i lumi,
Quelle ch' amano i boschi, e queste i fiumi.

† Achillini was born in the year 1574, and died in 1640.

the dominion of bad taste, whose influence, over the mind and the imagination, seemed to stifle every other species of talent. It was only by improving, and refining on the lustre of each other's thoughts, that authors could then flatter themselves with hopes of making a brilliant display; and to rest satisfied with the mere representation of truth and nature, either in sentiment or description, was, at that period, only to court obscurity. This corrupted taste of the Italians, for some time, likewise infected the literature of France. Achillini addressed a sonnet to Cardinal Richelieu, on the raising of the siege of Casal, in 1629, beginning with the following line:

"Sudate, o fochi! a preparar metalli!"
"Sweat, sweat, ye fires, to frame metallic tubes."

When this line was written, he was in high repute at the court of France. Such a verse is now only cited as an excellent specimen of this ridiculous and affected style. Achillini was the author, also, of a canzone inscribed to Richelieu, in honour of the Dauphin's birth, which obtained for him great consideration as well as more substantial preferments. We give below a specimen of his *Madrigal*, composed in the very spirit of an age, sparkling with all those *concetti* of the South, once so rapturously admired.*

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* Col fior de' fiori in mano
Il mio Lesbin rimiro,

The Scuderys, the Voitures, and the Balsacs, were among the foremost who imitated this fastidious and affected style, in France. It became the reigning fashion of the day. Boileau and Moliere were the authors who most contributed to bring it into disrepute. These revivers of good taste among the French, perceiving that such corrupt examples had been held out by Italy, expressed great contempt for Italian poetry, of which the purest ore appeared to them nothing better than tinsel. They introduced into France the word *concetti*, as being characteristic of the most affected and extravagant productions; whilst this term, which really signifies a power of poetic conception, is invariably received in a favourable sense by the Italians. Thus, they not only resisted the progress of false taste in France, but set an example, in their works, which afterwards extended its influence to Italian literature, and eventually induced succeeding writers to renounce the affectation and absurdities formerly so much in vogue. Public opinion was, at that period, subjected to such restraint, that

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Al fior respiro, e 'l pastorel sospiro.
Il fior sospira odori,
Lesbin respira ardori;
L'odor dell' uno odoro,
L' ardor dell' altro adoro,
Ed odorando ed adorando i' sento
Dal odor dal ardor ghiaccia e tormento.

Alessandro Marchetti, having translated the poem of Lucretius *De Naturâ Rerum*, with an elegance and vigour of poetical imagination which raised him above the spirit of his age, Cosmo III. would not consent to its publication, on the plea of its containing the Epicurean doctrines. If we consider the subject well, there are scarcely any opinions which have not some kind of connexion either with religion or with politics, and when every thing relating to these two subjects is dictated by a jealous government, under which every idea, varying from the standard of established authority, is considered as a crime against divine or human majesty, we must allow that freedom of mind and strength of genius are no longer to be expected. And should some individuals still have the courage to aspire to a degree of literary fame, their only chance of success seems to lie in the use of *concetti*, hyperbole, and affectation, with which they may make a brilliant display, and console themselves for the loss of nobler and more serious pursuits in the cause of freedom and of truth.

There is, indeed, only one poet belonging to the seventeenth century distinguished for his patriotic sentiments. That poet is the senator, Filicaia. It is somewhat remarkable with what ardour the spark of ancient liberty revived in his breast. He was a Florentine, born on the thirtieth of December, 1642, and he closed his

career on the twenty-fifth of September, 1707. His genius took its source in deep national and religious feelings, and in interests affecting the repose of Europe. It was first excited by witnessing the siege of Vienna by the Turks, in the year 1683, and its gallant defence by Charles V. duke of Lorraine, with its final deliverance by John Sobieski. Filicaia composed several *canzoni*, breathing heroic ardour, joy, and religious gratitude, in celebration of the Christian victory, and in a style very superior to any thing we find in the works of other poets of the age. In these we have the rare, and, indeed, the single example, during an entire century, of a native of Italy giving free expression to his thoughts and feelings in his poetry. The odes which he addressed to Leopold I. to the Duke of Lorraine, and to the King of Poland, all of whom returned very flattering acknowledgments to the poet in their letters, excited general admiration and enthusiasm, wherever they appeared. The wars of the succession, and the devastations committed by the French and German armies, in Italy, soon called forth new patriotic strains from his indignant muse. The calamities of his country were a theme not easily exhausted, and a series of productions were expressly devoted to the subject. There are six sonnets and a *canzone*. One of the former of these, which is here introduced, maintains, to this day, the highest degree of

reputation; and it is, perhaps, the most celebrated poetic specimen which the Italian literature of the seventeenth century affords.

Italia! thou to whom, in evil hour,
The fatal boon of beauty Nature gave,
Yet on thy front the sentence did engrave,
That ceaseless woe should be thy only dower!
Ah! were that beauty less, or more thy power!
That he who now compels thee to his arms,
Might gaze with cold indifference on thy charms,
Or tremble at thine eye's indignant lower;
Thou should'st not, then, behold, in glittering line,
From the high Alps embattled throngs descend,
And Gallic hordes pollute thy Po's clear wave;
Nor, whilst encompass'd close by spears, not thine,
Should'st thou by foreign hands thy rights defend,
Conquering or conquer'd, evermore a slave.

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* Italia! Italia! o tu cui feo la sorte
Dono infelice di bellezza, ond' hai
Funesta dote d' infiniti guai,
Che in fronte scritti per gran doglia porte.
Deh, fossi tu men bella, ò almen più forte!
Onde assai più ti paventasse, o assai
T' amasse men, chi del tuo bello ai rai
Par che si strugga, e pur si sfida a morte.
Che or giù dall' Alpi non vedrei torrenti
Scender d' armati, ne di sangue tinta
Bever l' onda del Pò Gallici armenti:
Nè te vedrei, del non tuo ferro cinta,
Pugnar col braccio di straniere genti,
Per servir sempre, ò vincitrice ò vinta.

While it is allowed that a certain grandeur of patriotic feeling pervades this sonnet, we may nevertheless trace, in one or two of the lines, the effects of the spirit of the age in which the poet wrote. The remaining sonnets are, by no means, of equal merit. Filicaia does not appear to have composed them in a free and consistent spirit. He was somewhat too careful of giving offence, in these heroic effusions, to the French, the German, and the Italian potentates. He dared not to show the least partiality; and least of all to inspire his countrymen with a wish to revenge their wrongs. With these views, he succeeded in avoiding to compromise his safety, but did not much add to the lustre of his fame.

The same age is remarkable for several mock heroic poems, which made their appearance from time to time, and whose reputation has outlived that of more serious works. The *Secchia Rapita* of Alessandro Tassoni, a native of Modena, born in 1565, has entitled him to rank among the best poets of Italy. He accompanied the Cardinal Colonna into Spain, and returned with very strong prejudices, which he did not attempt to disguise, against that country. His critical disquisitions first brought him into notice. He assailed the literary authority of Aristotle, and ventured to question the established merits of Petrarch, as a poet. This

opened a new field of controversy, in which he engaged with the utmost activity and ardour. On the death of Cardinal Colonna, he entered into the service of Charles Emanuel, Duke of Savoy, who employed him in a public character on several occasions. Towards the latter part of his life he visited Tuscany, where he terminated his days, in the year 1635. He published his poem of the *Secchia Rapita*, or *The Rape of the Bucket*, in 1622; with a notice that it had been written by him when very young, and had been ever since deposited in his desk. He probably conceived that it might, in some way, affect the dignity of a statesman, to be the declared author of a burlesque poem, more particularly at that advanced period of life; but its versification every where betrays marks of the author's maturer powers.

The subject of the *Secchia Rapita* arose out of the party wars between the Modenese and the Bolognese, during the thirteenth century; in which it appears that the Bucket was carried away from a well, by the heroes of Modena, out of the very heart of Bologna, and borne in triumph into their own city. There it is supposed to be to this day carefully preserved, under double lock and keys, in the belfry of the cathedral. The rage of the Bolognese at having suffered such a trophy to grace the walls of their adversaries, together with their struggles and strata-

gems to recover their treasure, afforded Tassoni materials out of which to form twelve mock-heroic cantos. The chief object of the poet, I am inclined to think, was a satirical exposure of the petty Italian wars, which exhausted the country, and left its natives an easy prey to the foreign sword. But if such were, indeed, his motive, the author appears soon to have lost sight of it; and his readers are quite at a loss to discover it through twelve books of battles, which have, in reality, too strong a resemblance to each other. They are told, however, with much ease and spirit, and with occasional elevation of style; qualities which we can by no means refuse to this amusing poet.* The introductions

* In his description of the manner in which King Heinsius was taken prisoner, Tassoni, while he ridicules the grave style of the real epic, employs one of the happiest images which the best specimens of the latter can afford. To this he adds a humorous picture of the manners of the times, as well as of the provincial eloquence of a magistrate, and of the jargon in which he spoke. *Canto* vi. *st.* 42.

Il Re si scuote, e a un tempo il ferro caccia
Nel ventre a Zagarin, che gli è rimpetto;
Ma non può svilupparsi da le braccia
Di Tognon, che gli cigne i fianchi, e 'l petto:
Ed ecco Periteo giugne, e l' abbraccia
Subito anch' egli, e 'l tien serrato e stretto
Ei l' uno e l' altro or tira, or alza, or spigne,
Ma da' legami lor non si disciegne.

to his several cantos are peculiarly rich in picturesque and poetical ornament; while his manner of characterizing the different personages engaged, evinces much real humour. Such is the surprise of the military equipage of the Florentines, flaming with ornaments of gold, so

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Qual fiero toro, a cui di funi ignote
Cinto sia il corno e 'l piè da cauta mano,
Muggisce, sbuffa, si contorce, e scuote,
Urta, si lancia, e si dibatte in vano;
E quando al fin de' lacci uscir non puote
Cader si lascia afflitto e stanco al piano:
Tal l'indomito Re, poiche comprese
D' affaticarsi indarno, alfin si rese.

Fù drizzato il carroccio, e fu rimesso
In sedia il Podestà tutto infangato,
Non si trovò il robon, ma gli fu messo
Indosso una corazza da soldato,
Le calze rosse abenche avea, col fesso
Dietro, e dinanzi un braghetton frappato,
E una squarcina in man, larga una spanna,
Parea il bargel di Caìfas e d' Anna.

Ei gridava in Bresciano; Innanz, Innanzi,
Che l' è rott' ol nemin, valent soldati
Feghe sbità la schitta a tucch sti Lanzi
Maledetti da De, scommunegati.
Così dicendo, già vedea gli avanzi
Del destro corno, andar quà e là sbandati,
E raggirarsi per que' campi aprichi
Cercando di salvar la pancia a fichi.

inviting to the avaricious eye of the enemy, and found to contain only dried figs and walnuts; which conveys an amusing idea of the sumptuous parsimony attributed to the Florentine people.* It is to be regretted that here, as in other instances, the burlesque poëtry of the age should be destitute of that species of interest to be conferred upon it by liberty alone; and we really hardly find it worth our while to amuse ourselves at the expense of personages who have

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* La terza insegna fù de Fiorentini,
Con cinque mila trà cavalli e fanti,
Che conduceano Anton Francesco Dini
E Averardo di Baccio Cavalcanti:
Non s' usavano Starne e Marzolini
Nè polli d' India allor, ne vin di Chianti;
Ma le lor vittovaglie eran caciole,
Noci, e castagne, e sorbe secche al sole.

E di queste n' avean con le bigonce
Mille asinelli al dipartir carcati,
Acciò per quelle strade alpestre e sconce
Non patisser di fame i lor soldati:
Ma le some coperte in guisa e conce
Avean con panni d' un color segnati,
Che facean di lontan mostra pomposa
Di salmeria superba e preziosa.

* *Canto* v. *st.* 36.

It is to possess themselves of these, that, in the following canto, the soldiers of Garfagnana, with the Germans, abandon King Heinsius, who, being thus deserted, is made prisoner.

been buried for the last five hundred years, and with whom we have no points of resemblance, in manners, in customs, or in character. The implied satire on the democratical government of the Bolognese in the thirteenth century, or the wars of King Heinsius, are of too insipid a flavour for us; and, without looking for much stinging satire in a mock-heroic poem, we might reasonably expect something a little more lively.

About the same period, flourished Francesco Bracciolini, a native of Pistoia*, who likewise produced a comic-heroic poem, under the title of *Lo Scherno degli Dei*, or *The Mockery of the Gods*. They are, in truth, the Pagan deities, introduced by Bracciolini among the hills of Tuscany, and mingling with the peasants of the place, in order to make themselves, on all occasions, more agreeably ridiculous. In a dialogue by way of preface, he boasts with infinite complacency of the service he had rendered to true religion, by this witty triumph over ancient errors. He very frequently presents us with mythology travestied. The gods declaim in a mean and vulgar dialect; and he succeeds in exciting a smile at the contrast between the grace and dignity which our memory still attaches to the Homeric fables, and the meanness of the language and of the interests of the lowest classes of the people, among whom his

* Born 1566, and died 1645.

heroes dwell.* In a few instances, however, the author seems to rise above his usual strain of parody, when his descriptions assume a more pleasing and poetical character. We have an instance of this kind in his introduction of the

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* Of this description is the dialogue between Bellona and Mars, the former of whom wishes to persuade her brother to attack Vulcan. *Canto* i. *st.* 29.

Dicendo, O bella cosa, il Dio dell' armi
Scender dal ciel per far una quistione,
E poi fuggirsi? un ignominia parmi
Da non lavarla mai ranno o sapone;
Io per te cominciava a vergognarmi,
Però discesi dal sovran balcone,
E voglio in ogni modo, ò molto ò poco
Che tu meni le man col Dio del foco.

Marte risponde all' hor, Come tu credi
Per paura ò viltà non mi ritiro,
Ch' al corpo, al sangue, il pesterei co piedi,
E ridurrélo in forma di butiro;
Mà perche fabbricar piche, ne spiedi
Non sà se non costui, se ben rimiro,
E s' io l' uccido, al poco mio giudizio
Cade 'l mestier dell' arme in precipizio.

In oltre tu non sai ch' egli è fratello
Nostro, e Venere sua, nostra cognata,
E toccherebbe a noi farle il mantello
Da vedova modesta e sconsolata,
E rivestire a brun quel ghiottoncello
D' amore, e tutta quanta la brigata;
E saria d' uopo per nostro decoro
Spendere ne la cera del mortoro.

portrait of a votary of Bacchus, whom Venus discovers asleep in a solitary cave.*

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* Appar nel mezzo, infra due pietre rotte
Da l' età lunga un antro orrido, e voto,
Pieno d' incerto lume, e d' una notte
Che non lascia trà l' ombre il mondo ignoto,
Per diritto sentier la bocca inghiotte
Ne l' ampio ventre il nubiloso Notò,
Suona la grotta a questo vento, e freme,
Da lui percossa, e nessun altro teme.

Passa la Dea nel orrid' antro, ov' ella
Sente il misto romor che fuor se n' esce,
E illuminando la nascosa cella
Toglie a lei l' ombra, a se bellezza accresce,
Così trà rotte nuvole, più bella
Che per sereno ciel Cintia riesce,
E più diletta a riguardar la rosa
Cinta di spine infra la siepe ombrosa.

Nel orrid' antro uom' vermiglio e grasso
Sù per l' umido suol disteso giace,
Vinto dal vino, e 'l grave ciglio e basso
Preme alcun raggio a la visibil face;
La stanca fronte hà per guanciale un sasso
Di musco avvolto, e d' edera tenace,
Natural felpa, onde s' adorna e veste,
Capezzal duro in coltrice terrestre.

Giace con la ritonda aperta bocca
Lo sturato barletto al lato manco,
E 'l turacciolo suo, ch' hor non l' imbocca
Pende legato a uno spaghetto bianco,
La saliera v' è ancor più volte tocca
Dal fiero ramolaccio acuto e franco
Vincitor de la lingua, onde è mestiere
Che trafitta da lui, dimandi bere.

We can scarcely convey an idea of the extreme violence and animosity with which the question of the first discovery of the comic epopee was then discussed in Italy. Was Tassoni or Bracciolini best entitled to the honour of original invention? It was pretty generally admitted, on all hands, that Tassoni had been the first to write, but that Bracciolini was the first to publish his production. There was, however, little comparison between the merits of the two poets; Bracciolini being considered as in every way inferior to his rival. It was easily perceived, both from their subject and the manner of treating it, that neither had been indebted to the other; while no one appeared to recollect, that after Berni, there could be little occasion for farther dispute respecting the origin of the mock epopee. But, in truth, the desire of a fresh literary warfare had arisen, and it was thus indulged. The excessive rancour of this controversy is quite characteristic of the seventeenth century, and offers a striking contrast between the fine intellectual energies which the Italians still displayed, and the very paltry interests for which it was their fate to contend. By arguing themselves into real warmth, in pursuit of objects equally vain and unprofitable, they created a kind of illusion, which imposed upon them for a moment, and led them to believe that they had yet an existence—that they were not yet utterly extinct.

Of a later period, there are two more examples of the same species of epopee, which are highly appreciated by the lovers of Tuscan poetry at this day. The first of these is the *Malmantile racquistato,* by Lorenzo Lippi, published in 1676; the second is called the *Torracchione desolato,* from the pen of Paolo Minucci. It is well known that the Italians have a peculiar relish for the popular and idiomatic expressions used by the natives of Florence, in which, however rude and simple, they discover a certain harmony and grace; and the reputation of these poems is thus founded on their rare merit, in exhibiting the Florentine dialect in a perfectly pure, yet homely style. The Academy della Crusca, engaged, at that period, in compiling its voluminous dictionary, thus preparing another controversy between the Tuscans and the other literary parties, had, likewise, attended to the preservation of this more simple and familiar mode of speech. Many Italian writers, even of this age, still retain so much admiration of its peculiarities, that they consider no other dialect as comparable to it; nor any style as perfect, which is not founded on the language spoken by the common people of Florence, during the fourteenth century. Those, however, who are not prejudiced in favour of this popular and pedantic style, will take comparatively little interest in the two poems of the *Malmantile* and of the *Torrac-*

chione. Next to the divine comedy of Dante, the *Malmantile* is, perhaps, the production on which the Italian critics have bestowed the most pains, and which has been published, accompanied with the most ample commentaries, and in the most splendid form.

The castle of Malmantile, the capture of which is the subject of the poem, is built upon an eminence in the lower Val d'Arno, about eight miles from Florence. One of the heroes declares, that it might pass for the eighth wonder of the world, but he does not inform us where it is situated. The force destined for the attack, was sent from the neighbourhood of Florence. But, though the author informs us that it embarks before arriving at its destination, he cautiously avoids giving us the least information respecting the country to which it is transported. The time is equally uncertain, and the heroes and heroines of the story have no sort of relation to the inhabitants of this world, or, indeed, to any thing we know. By the authority of Turpin, which is frequently cited, and by histories of ogres and enchantments, we are transported to the romantic times of chivalry, at the same time that many popular allusions still remind us of the seventeenth century. By attempting to avoid the appearance of any individual application of his satire, the author ceases to interest or to fix the imagination of his readers;

he leaves us no curiosity; and when we look for wit and spirit, we are presented with proverbs and provincialisms, whose language has little of the air of reality and truth. I have, indeed, had some difficulty to discover a few stanzas at all worthy of selection, to convey an idea of the merits of this too highly vaunted poem.*

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* Era in quei tempi là quando i geloni
Tornano a chiuder l' osterie de cani
E talun che si spaccia in milioni
Manda al Presto il tabì pe' panni lani;
Ed era appunto l' ora chç i crocchioni
Si calano a l' assedio de' caldani;
Ed escon con le canne e co' randelli
I ragazzi a pigliare i pipistrelli;

Quando in terra l' armata con la scorta
Del gran Baldone a Malmantil s' invia:
Onde un famiglio nel serrar la porta
Sentì romoreggiar tanta genia.
Un vecchio era quest' uom di vista corta,
Che l' erre ognor perdeva a l' osteria;
Talche tra il bere e l' esser ben d' età
Non ci vedeva più da terza in là.

Per questo mette mano a la scarsella
Ov' ha più ciarpe assai d' un rigattiere;
Perchè vi tiene infin la faverella
Che la mattina mette sul brachiere.
Come suol far chi giuoca a cruscherella,
Due ore andò a la cerca intere intere:
E poi ne trasse, in mezzo a due fagotti
Un par d' occhiali affumicati e rotti.

The rise of the opera may, perhaps, be considered as the only literary event of the seventeenth century of which Italy can justly boast. With the decline of literature, the triumph of the various arts of design had also ceased. Michael Angelo had been the contemporary of Ariosto; his pupils and successors flourished in the time of Tasso; and thenceforward the flashes of true genius no longer animated the canvass or the poet's page. The astonishing progress of musical science, however, succeeded to that of the sister arts, as if the intellectual energies of man sought development in the only career left open to them; and those who felt within

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I quali sopra il naso a petronciano
Con la sua flemma pose a cavalcioni,
Talchè meglio scoperse di lontano
Esser di gente armata più squadroni.
Spaurito di ciò cala pian piano
Per non dar ne la scala i pedignoni:
E giunto a basso lagrima e singhiozza
Gridando quanto mai n' hà ne la strozza.

Dicendo forte, perchè ognun l' intenda:
A l' armi a l' armi, suonisi a martello:
Si lasci il giuoco, il ballo e la merenda,
E serrinsi le porte a chiavistello;
Perchè quaggiù nel piano è la tregenda,
Che ne viene a la volta del castello:
E se non ci serriamo o facciam testa,
Mentre balliamo, vuol suonare a festa.

Canto iii. *st.* 3.

themselves the impulse of a creative faculty, had recourse, as a last resort, to harmony, in which they might give full and uncontrolled expression to their genius, without encountering the vengeance of inquisitions. Nor were the Italians, from their organization, less susceptible of the charms of music than of poetry and of painting. A fine natural taste led them at once to appreciate, with little effort or reflection, whatever was most pure and beautiful of its kind. The ablest composers of the present day venture not, without some distrust, to perform their new pieces for the opera, before the Lazzaroni of Naples; watching the motion of their pointed caps, filling the whole area of Santo Carlo, as a sure indication whether the music will succeed or not. No means are so effectual to rouse the modern Italians from a state of apathy as a fine voice and a striking style of execution; and I have frequently seen houses surrounded by the lower classes, struggling to hear an amateur concert, inspired by the genius of a celebrated female singer. The increasing progress and importance of music, at a time when poetry was on the decline, gave the former such a superiority, that poetry became a mere accessory and ornament to it. It was rendered subservient to the merest trifles, and to all the variations and fashions of the day; while the sister art approached nearer and nearer to perfection, in proportion to its established importance, and to the influence which it exerted over the other arts.

It is highly probable that on the first revival of the dramatic art, music accompanied theatrical representations. In imitation of the Greeks, the chorus was introduced into Italian tragedy, and it was invariably sung. Pastoral dramas were likewise interspersed with these songs, accompanied with instruments. But music had been only the accessory in such compositions, intended to give zest and perfection to the festival, but not to constitute its very nature. The first occasion on which this order was reversed, was in the year 1594. Ottavio Rinuccini, a Florentine poet, with little genius and invention, but with a fine musical ear, that seemed to feel the beauties of language only in relation to harmony, united his efforts to those of three musicians, Peri, Giacopo Corsi, and Caccini. Together they produced a mythological drama, in which they meant to display the united excellencies of the fine arts in the most splendid dress. Rinuccini appeared to be less ambitious of the reputation of a poet, than of setting off his associates to the greatest advantage. He neglected nothing which might give attraction to the decorations and machinery, and surprise or captivate the senses of the audience. Men of letters had, at least, preserved the memory of the musical declamation of the Greeks, and Peri or Caccini imagined he had discovered that this consisted in the recitative, which he blended so intimately with the

poetry, that there was nothing farther to be merely spoken, throughout the whole of the opera. Thus poetry, written only with a view to being sung, very soon assumed a different character; and the developement of scenes, already too extended, was no longer admissible. The poet's object was to produce effect, and to this he readily sacrificed the conduct of the piece, hastening or retarding the course of events as he thought best adapted to musical exhibition, rather than to the natural expression of the passions. In pursuit of a different species of harmony, he abandoned the lyric form of the *canzone*, on account of its length of period, and adopted that which Chiabrera was, at that time, employed in introducing into his stanzas, borrowed from the ode of the ancients.* This complete union between poetry

* He makes use of the same form of verse in dialogue, of which we may judge from the dispute between the two divinities of love and poetry, forming the ground-work of the action.

APOLLO. Dimmi, possente arciero,
Qual fera attendi, o qual serpente al varco
Ch' hai la faretra e l' arco?
AMORE. Se da quest' arco mio
Non fù Pitone ucciso,
Arcier non son però degno di riso,
E son del cielo, Apollo, un nume anch' io.
APOLLO. Sollò; ma quando scocchi
L' arco, sbendi tu gli occhi,
O ferisci a l' oscuro, arciero esperto?

and music was not, however, the work of a moment. It occupied more than an age in its discovery and perfection. The honour of the former belongs to Rinuccini, and Metastasio lays full claim to the latter. Rinuccini's first attempt consisted of little more than one of Ovid's metamorphoses thrown into dialogue. Apollo is exhibited in the act of wounding the serpent Python, while the nymphs and shepherds are seen in flight. Scornful in his victory, he ventures to taunt the god of Love, who takes his usual revenge. Smitten with Daphne's beauty, Apollo pursues her; she flies, and a shepherd soon after appears, who gives a relation of her metamorphosis. Such is this little drama, consisting of four choruses, divided into as many short acts, hardly amounting altogether to four hundred and fifty verses. The choruses are given in very easy couplets, which

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VENERE. S' hai di saper desio
D' un cieco arcier le prove,
Chiedilo al Re de l' onde,
Chiedilo in cielo a Giove:
E trà l' ombre profonde
Del regno orrido oscuro
Chiedi, chiedi a Pluton s' ei fù sicuro?

APOLLO. Se in cielo, in mare, in terra,
Amor, trionfi in guerra,
Dove, dove m'ascondo?
Chi novo ciel m' insegna, o novo mondo?

seem to be exquisitely adapted for music*. The remaining portion of the opera was probably al-

* The last chorus, which terminates the piece, ends thus:

S' a fuggir movo le piante
Vero amante,
Contro amor cruda e superba,
Venir possa il mio crin d' auro
Non pur lauro,
Ma qual' è più miser erba.

Sia vil canna il mio crin biondo,
Che l' immondo
Gregge ognor schianti e dirami;
Sia vil fien ch' ai crudi denti
De gli armenti
Tragga ognor l' avida fame.

Ma s' a preghi sospirosi
Amorosi
Di pietà sfavillo ed ardo,
S' io prometto a l' altrui pene
Dolce spene
Con un riso e con un guardo.

Non soffrir, cortese amore
Che 'l mio ardore
Prenda a scherno alma gelata;
Non soffrir ch' in piaggia o 'n lido
Cor infido
M' abbandoni innamorata.

Fà ch' al foco de' miei lumi
Si consumi
Ogni gelo, ogni durezza;
Ardi poi quest' alma allora,
Ch' altra adora
Qual si sia la mia bellezza.

together recitative, as we find no detached airs, duets, or pieces by several voices.

The *Euridice* of Rinuccini followed his *Daphne*, and was produced, likewise, by an union of talent with the same musicians. It was represented, for the first time, in 1600, on occasion of the nuptials of Mary de' Medici and Henry IV. He shortly after composed *Ariana*, the reception of which was no less brilliant. The success of the opera was thus complete; and every court eagerly followed the example held out by Florence. These first attempts were then brought to perfection. More lively action was given to the dramatic parts, and greater variety to the music, in which the airs were agreeably blended with the recitative. Duets and other harmonized pieces were also added; and, after the lapse of a century, Apostolo Zeno rose to carry it to as high a degree of perfection as it could possibly attain, before the spirit of a Metastasio breathed a soul of fire into the ingenious and happy form created by others.

Apostolo Zeno, of a Venetian family, originally from Candia, was born in the year 1669. Passionately devoted to the study of history, he was the first to introduce historical pieces into the scenes of the opera, instead of confining himself within the prescribed limits of mythology. The reputation of French tragedy had already begun to extend itself through Europe; and he often availed him-

self of some of its best pieces, as his models. Of sixty operas which he brought before the public, the most complete and successful were undoubtedly those in which he had imitated our best classics. Thus, the whole of the plot, the incidents, and the characters of his *Iphigenia* are borrowed from Racine, in such a way as he thought best adapted to the opera. The language of the passions is throughout imbued with that solemn harmony, with which music so well accords, without, however, arriving at the vigour and brevity belonging to tragedy. The historical pieces which he produced, though by no means of a more effeminate or romantic character than those of Metastasio, are certainly a more extravagant burlesque of history. We feel that Metastasio could not have represented human nature otherwise than he does; whilst Zeno, who as constantly dwells upon the passion of love, is deficient in all that harmony, delicacy, and ardour, which, in the former, transport us out of ourselves.* Zeno,

* We subjoin a few examples from one of his dramas, entitled *I due Dittatori*, founded upon the quarrel between the great Fabius Cunctator and M. Minutius, lieutenant of the horse, during the second Punic war. The passion of two captive princesses is, in Zeno's hands, the hidden source of all these grand events. Arisba, a Carthaginian captive, avails herself of her charms to sow dissension in the Roman camp, and congratulates herself, as follows, upon her success. *Act III. Scene* 8.

Colpì al segno lo stral: gittati ho i semi
Del civil odio. Vedrò in breve armarsi
Tribuni e Dittatori.

likewise, composed several comic operas, which appeared about the year 1597, coeval with those of a more serious kind. They were modelled upon the extemporaneous comedies already well known. In them the Harlequins, Columbines, and other masks of the Italian theatre, appear as the principal personages of the piece. But Zeno did not exhibit much talent in the comic opera, and this very amusing sort of national spectacle, to which Italy is indebted for much of her excellent music, has never hitherto been illustrated by any superior genius.

Qual gloria per Arisbe!
E se dirlo a me lece,
Forse Annibale ancor tanto non fece.
A l'uomo il sapere,
L' ardire, il potere
Natura donò.
E a noi che lasciò?
Astuzia, e beltà.
Ma il sesso più frale,
A senno, e possanza
Sovrasta, e prevale,
Se d' armi si forti
Valer ben si sà.

Being jealous of the son of Fabius, Minutius condemns him to death; while Fabius, out of regard to military discipline, is unwilling to oppose the sentence, but thus addresses his son as he is borne to punishment. *Act IV. Scene 7.*

So qual sono, e qual tu sei.
Tu i pietosi affetti miei,
E la patria avrà i più forti.

Apostolo Zeno was invited to Vienna by the Emperor Charles VI., where he was invested with the two very opposite employments, of imperial historiographer, and of poet laureat to the court opera. He lived to a very advanced age, dying in the middle of the last century, in 1750, at the age of eighty-one years, and having the mortification of beholding his reputation eclipsed in his old age by Metastasio.

The seventeenth century was remarkable, likewise, for its abundance of dramatic authors. Innumerable tragedies, comedies, and pastorals, were every where recited before the different courts, and in the theatres, of Europe. Not any of these, however, were comparable to those of a former age; nor are they, indeed, to be placed in competition with those of the eighteenth century. The tragedies are singularly defi-

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Dura invitto; e ad ogni età
In tua gloria passerà
La virtù che teco porti.

His son takes leave of the object of his affections, in the following air. *Act IV. Scene* 8.

Concedimi ch' io baci
Cara, la bianca mano,
Favor di tua pietade a l' amor mio.
Ma tu sospiri e taci:
Mi basta il tuo dolor; Ersilia addio.

In the verse of Zeno we certainly find the origin of that of Metastasio, but nothing of his spirit, sentiment and grace.

cient in their delineation of characters and of manners; the style partakes of the inflated taste of the age, and the action flags; while the authors seem to have hesitated between the pedantic imitation of the ancients, and the mistaken route pursued by the moderns. Their productions are, perhaps, now worthy of mention, only as objects of literary research and curiosity; nor could they be represented or endured on any theatre, much less supply other writers with models or ideas in their future efforts. The poet's sole object was to surprise the spectator by the brilliancy of the scenery, or by a bustling movement of the stage, while probability was wholly sacrificed to the general desire of witnessing the appearance of monsters, combats, and processions of chariots and horses. The comedies were, in the same manner, unconnected, insipid, low, and appreciated only by the populace. The pastorals became more affected, unnatural, and dull; insomuch that the opera seemed the only species of theatrical representation at all esteemed, or which, indeed, deserved to be so.

It is with difficulty we can conceive how the very general corruption, which had introduced itself into every branch of literature, and palsied the powers of the human mind, was arrested in its progress. We should have expected that the false taste of the age would have inevitably produced a total neglect and cessation of mental

cultivation; that in the pursuit of trifling and despicable objects, all nobler pursuits would have been abandoned; and that Italy would have again fallen under the leaden sceptre of corrupted taste, as she had before done for a whole age, succeeding that of Adrian. And it is highly probable, that if Italy had had to depend on her own resources, her national literature would have ceased to exist; for if we consult such of her authors as are in nothing indebted to the genius of other nations, we shall acknowledge them to be worthy disciples of the school of Marini and of Achillini. Nor is modern Italy, at this day, without abundance of sonnets which have not the least pretension to our notice, as destitute of thought or feeling as they are full of extravagance and false taste. To those writers who are acquainted only with their native language, all poetry appears to consist of images: extravagance is in their eyes beauty; while sonorous words and superfluous epithets are substituted in the place of thought and meaning. But the example of the great poets of the age of Louis XIV. soon extended beyond the national barriers, into other countries; and the reputation of their works travelled beyond the Alps, towards the commencement of the eighteenth century. These masterpieces of literature were soon put in competition with the tasteless productions of the *Seicen-*

tisti; and the result was favourable to the triumph of good taste. They were found to be more deeply imbued with the qualities of thought and feeling, than native Italian verse; and, notwithstanding the jealousy of inquisitions, both political and religious, they brought along with them a spirit of inquiry, of which Italy stood so much in need. Europe was beginning to awaken out of her lethargy; nobler views were held out; and mankind began to aspire after greater and better things, connected with their improvement and happiness. Even Italy, in defiance of the efforts of princes and of prelates, exhibited some share of the growing energies which marked the opening of the eighteenth century. The first, and not the least happy, result of the influence of the well known French writers, and of a few of the English just beginning to be read in Italy, was the reform which they introduced into the theatrical and poetical character, so totally destitute of propriety and taste. The poems of Frugoni, the dramas of Metastasio, and even the comedies of Goldoni, have all, more or less, a moral tendency; and if we, for a moment, contemplate the general degradation of the people, and the revolting license of their poets before these writers appeared, we must allow them to be entitled to no small degree of praise. Poetry, once more restored to decency and to

good feeling, was better enabled to plume her wings for more noble and lofty flights. The first effort of the most attractive of the sister arts, ought naturally to be to return to a purer and more moral atmosphere, if there be any truth in the assertion, that high thoughts have their origin in the heart.

CHAPTER XVII.

The eighteenth Century.—Frugoni—Metastasio.

THE close of the seventeenth century is rendered remarkable by the birth of Metastasio and of Frugoni, two men destined to revive the declining fame of Italian literature, in the succeeding age. Carlo Innocenzo Frugoni, one of the most distinguished of the modern lyric poets, was born at Genoa, on the twenty-first of November, 1692, of a noble family, whose name became extinct after his death. He was educated by the Jesuits, and compelled by his parents to assume the religious habit at thirteen years of age. After many years of tedious suffering and anxiety, the Pope released him from his more strict and irksome vows, although Frugoni still remained a priest; cut off, by his profession, from more active life, and from all those domestic ties which the warmth of his heart and the activity of his mind would have naturally led him to embrace. Italy was then divided between the partizans of the affected and finical taste introduced by Marini, and those who, in opposition to this false stand-

ard, recommended only a servile imitation of the writers of the sixteenth century, or that of the classics, their earliest models. Frugoni rejected the opinions of both these parties; his genius suggested to him a bolder and far more original career. He devoted himself to the study of those poets who flourished in the ages scarcely emerged from barbarism. Without making use of them as models, he discovered in them examples of true greatness. He felt within himself the enthusiasm of soul capable of celebrating the fame of heroes, as it deserves to be celebrated, rather by the heart and the imagination, than by the memory; and he scorned the inferior talent, which reproduces only what has already been done.

Frugoni has treated, in his poems, on a great variety of subjects. All passions, both human and divine, seem to have furnished him with materials for sonnets, canzoni, and lyrical effusions, in every kind of metre. But it is in the *versi sciolti*, or blank verse, that he more especially surpasses his predecessors, in the simplicity of his expressions, in the eloquent emotion that inspires him, and in the boldness of his poetry. But, perhaps, he may be justly reproached with having too frequently mingled science and polite literature together; his acquaintance with the more abstruse sciences being so very intimate and profound, that he not unfrequently borrowed his images wholly from these sources, and

treated, in verse, subjects generally considered to be very unfit for poetry. No one, however, could have accomplished such a task with a greater degree of elegance, and with more brilliant and striking effect. It is not, indeed, uncommon, in Italy, thus to mingle science with poetry; where people of very slight attainments hasten to display their knowledge on every fresh acquisition, as a man exhibits his newly acquired riches. The farther we advance in civilization, the greater is the necessity we feel of giving to poetry more substantial materials of thought: and when enthusiasm no longer glows in the poem, we must seek to satisfy the judgment as well as the imagination. It is thus that the Italians, to whom true philosophy was as "a fountain sealed," have frequently substituted science in the place of reflection and thought. Celebrated *improvisatori* have been known to make the science of numbers, the properties of bodies, and even the anatomy of the human frame, objects of their serious study, that they might be better enabled to answer, in rhyme, any sort of questions which might be addressed to them.

Frugoni, as poet to the court of Parma, under the last of the Farnese, and the Bourbons who succeeded them, was appointed manager of the public spectacles; and was often occupied, in a most unworthy manner, in translating little pieces for the theatre, and in penning epithalamiums

and occasional verses, upon subjects by no means congenial to his taste. He lived very luxuriously, however, at this court, being seldom without some love-intrigue, and passionately attached to the society of women to an advanced age; preserving, along with the passions, the fire and the imagination of youth. He died at Parma, at the age of sixty-six, on the twentieth of December, 1768. His reputation, however great, does not seem to have extended farther than Italy, from the circumstance of lyrical poetry being less susceptible of translation than any other kind, and less likely to be relished where the language is not thoroughly understood.

Frugoni owed his education to Gravina, a celebrated philosopher and jurisconsult of that age. Endowed with an exquisite taste and genius for letters, far greater, indeed, than we should imagine from the productions of his own muse, Gravina was, likewise, the instructor of Metastasio. If the reputation of the former of his pupils was confined within the bounds of Italy, that of the latter, however, extended over all Europe. We are at a loss to mention any author who wrote in a spirit more congenial to modern feelings and tastes, or one who has exercised greater influence in proportion to the eminence to which he was raised. Born at Rome, on the third day of January, 1698, he was early brought up to the trade of a goldsmith; but Gravina,

who appreciated his fine talents, took him to his own house, changing his name from Trapassi to the Greek translation of the same word, and hence he was called Metastasio. He took care, at the same time, to have him instructed in every branch of knowledge likely to facilitate his progress in the poetic art; and he encouraged his genius for extemporaneous effusions, which, by enlarging his powers of poetical language, enabled him to express the finest traits of sentiment and passion with equal grace and facility. In the mean time, Metastasio became attached to the style of composition by which he attained to such a height of celebrity. At the early age of fourteen, he wrote a tragedy, entitled *Justin*, which may be found among his works. It is, in truth, a very indifferent production; but the undertaking, of itself, does honour to so young a person. From that piece, it is clear that the genius of Metastasio was turned to the opera, and, indeed, his tragedy, in five acts, may be said to be an opera. The flow of the verse is extremely musical; and airs are introduced into his chorus, in the same manner as those inserted, at a later period, in his more finished productions. Gravina, afterwards, accompanied his pupil to Crotona, his native place, in the kingdom of Naples, that he might receive the instructions of Gregorio Caroprese, who had also been his own master in the Platonic philosophy. On his return to Rome, he died in the year

1718, leaving, by will, all his property, which was pretty considerable, to his pupil Metastasio.

For a century and a half, Italy had been unable to boast of her literary superiority; but, in producing Metastasio, nature seemed to have made her ample amends, as none of her writers ever more completely united all the qualities that constitute a poet; vivacity of imagination, and refinement of feeling, with every charm of versification and expression. Nor shall we easily find one who, by the mere force of his style, is entitled to be considered as a more graceful painter, or a more delightful musician. Metastasio made no pretensions, however, to the highest order of genius. He did not aim at those lofty and vigorous creations of the poet which excite our admiration by their sublimity. He wished to be the poet of the opera, and in this he succeeded; and confining himself to the path which he had chalked out, he surpassed the most distinguished writers of Italy, or, perhaps, of any other nation. He very correctly appreciated the peculiar character of the theatre, to which he devoted his talents; and in a species of composition which has never conferred much reputation on any other poet, he has produced the most national poetry that Italy, perhaps, can boast of possessing, and which is most deeply impressed upon the memory and feelings of the people.

The object of tragedy, so differently explained

by different critics, and as diversely understood by their readers, has, in reality, varied with the variations of time and place. With the ancients it was, in turn, religious, moral, or political; when, revealing the immutable laws and mysteries of fate, the poets sought to fortify exalted minds by an acquaintance with misfortune. It has consisted among the moderns, either in the simple display of deep emotions, or in the living picture of nature; or, founded upon a still more noble system, it comprises the worship of all that is most beautiful in the productions of the mind, and the admiration of art carried to its perfection, united to natural truth.

The opera could not boast so proud an origin. Taking its rise in the voluptuous courts of princes, it had none of the elements favourable to the growth of heroes. Its union of qualities was expected to yield every enjoyment, and the most pleasing emotions, by captivating, at the same moment, both the ear and the eye, and gratifying the tenderest affections of the soul. To ennoble pleasure, and to render it, in some degree, sacred, by the mixture of refined and elevated sentiment; and, if we are to look for political motives, to screen the prince from the shame of his own indolence and effeminacy, and to blind the people to every consideration but that of the passing moment; such would seem to have been the spirit of the Italian opera. And such it was, as

it appeared in the courts of the Medici and the Farnese, and on the theatres of Venice, where voluptuousness was encouraged by the senate for interests of state. In this situation Metastasio found it, when he first entered upon his career; and without examining the effeminate character of this species of poetry, he eagerly followed the impulse of his feelings, which led him to adopt a refined sort of Epicurean doctrine, identifying every thing that was heroic, elevated, and pure, with the passion of love. His language was of that rich and impassioned nature, formed to carry to its most luxurious pitch a relish for all those pleasures of existence, derived from dancing, painting, and a species of poetry still more seductive than these, of which an audience so vividly feels the power. His predecessors, on the other hand, hesitating between an imitation of the Greek, the French, and even the Spanish dramatists, as well as of the pastoral poets of Italy, failed to discover the true laws of this kind of composition. Metastasio seized upon them with a daring hand, regardless of the indignation of pedantic critics. Scorning to subject himself to unity of place, he delighted in varying the scene, commanding a wider field for all that brilliant display of theatrical variety and effect, on which the charm of the opera so much depends. He had much more regard to the unity of time, without confining himself altogether within the

limits prescribed, in such a way as to embrace as many incidents, processions, and ceremonies, within the four and twenty hours, as the good-nature of the spectators could well admit. He submitted to regulate the unity of action by the circumstance of being obliged to bring forward two sets of personages, three male and three female lovers, upon the boards, to serve as the means of contrast to the musician. The catastrophe of his pieces is almost invariably happy; as the languor of soul, consequent upon the music, would have been too much disturbed by very deep or painful emotions. He succeeded with unequalled skill, in combining natural expression with all the dignity and richness sought for in lyric poetry; and he infused into the combination of his words and lines an irresistible harmony, which it is the boast of the sublime accompaniments of Pergolese, to have so faithfully and accurately preserved.

Metastasio composed no less than twenty-eight grand operas, besides many of a shorter kind, a number of *ballette*, and celebrations of festivals; a species of dialogue intermixed with musical airs and recitative, and very frequently enlivened by a dramatic action. He borrowed his subjects almost indiscriminately from mythology or history, and brought upon the stage most of the different people and different countries, belonging to the ancient world. He is also

indebted to Ariosto for one of his more romantic and chivalric pieces, entitled *Ruggiero*, which must be referred to the period of the middle ages. It is to this very enlarged view of different countries, ages, and manners, that Metastasio owes all those ornamental varieties introduced into his lyric scenes, the very great diversity of decorations and costumes, and even that richness of local imagery, in which his poetry so much abounds. But he has not been so successful in variety of character, interests, and passions, as he might, perhaps, have been by more minute observation and analysis of nature and historic truth. Metastasio, carried away by his exquisite musical taste, sacrificed the higher objects of his art to the gratification of this feeling. Music, however well adapted to give expression to the passions, cannot so well serve to mark the different situations in a piece; and the science would only be rendered ridiculous, by being made to assume a character expressive of the different manners and language of each people. We should feel disgusted at hearing barbarism celebrated in wild and savage strains; or if, in singing of love, it were attempted also to convey an idea of the pride of the Romans, and the despotism of the Orientals. Aware, in some degree, of this uniformity in music, Metastasio did not attempt to follow his heroes to Rome, or into the East. Whatever names or whatever dresses he bestows upon

them, they are invariably characters of the same stamp, whose manners and whose passions have a strong resemblance, and whose scene of action is always the lyric theatre. Such manners, having no prototypes in any nation, seem, singularly enough, to be formed out of the pastoral and romantic elements of another age. Love is, indeed, the animating principle of all these dramas; it is every where irresistible, and the immediate motive to every action. The other passions, however, are gifted with the same refined and imaginary qualities; and we behold patriotism, liberty, loyalty, filial love, and chivalric honour, all carried, by the poet, to the same extremes. There are sentiments with which the world acknowledges no sympathy; a degree of devotedness which no virtue requires; and on the other hand, examples of baseness and perfidy, which, we rejoice to reflect, are no longer real. The whole of Metastasio's plays exhibit the same opposition of interests between our passions and our duty, or between two contending principles of duty, always under the same ideal character. The plot is throughout ravelled by the perfidy of some rival, or by that of an inferior agent, who is purposely drawn in very dark colours, and on whom the whole odium of the mischief is made to rest; while the contrast to such a character is gifted with all the perfections in the poet's power to bestow. The intrigue is brought to light either

by some very magnanimous effort of virtue, or by an unsuccessful attempt to execute some diabolical project, and the drama almost always closes in a happy manner. If, indeed, any personage perishes, he is one, at least, who has richly merited his fate.

The sameness of manners, extravagance of character, and invariably happy catastrophes, produce, it must be allowed, a feeling of monotony in Metastasio's plays. One piece conveys too complete an idea of all that remain; and, when we have once familiarized ourselves with the author's manner, we may pretty accurately divine, as soon as the overture of each begins, what will be the nature of the plot, and what its disclosure. If, however, we have the candour to keep in view, that Metastasio was the poet of the opera; that the emotions he wished to excite were all in reference to music, and were never intended to leave violent or painful impressions on the mind; we shall cease to reproach him for his voluptuous tenderness and effeminacy, for the ideal beauty of his sentiments, and even for the invariably happy termination of his pieces. We perceive that these defects were inherent in the nature of the subject, and not in the poet who treated it; and we, also, feel sensible that he carried his art to its highest degree of perfection. His dramas invariably open with striking and imposing effect, and are full of magnificence and at-

tractions, calculated to rivet the attention of the audience. He gives a very simple exposition of the most intricate action, and brings the spectators, without much preface, into the most interesting situations it affords. In the inventing and varying of these, he displays the greatest skill; and no one knew better than Metastasio, how to create in others an impassioned interest in his subject, by the manner of weaving his plot. The language in which he clothes the darling passion of his drama, has in it all that is most delicate and impassioned in love. He developes, with a surprising air of reality, the most elevated sentiments attached to loyalty, filial love, and the love of our country, to all of which he attributes ideal excellencies, both in action and in character. We must add that the flow of his verse in the recitative, is, altogether, the most pure and harmonious known in any language; and that the airs or strophes, at the close of the different scenes, breathe a fine lyric spirit, and a richness of poetical expression not surpassed by the very first masters in the art. In conclusion, the adaptation of the sentiment to the musical accompaniment is every where so justly observed, that not an image or an expression is held out to the musician, which is not naturally adapted to harmonic developement, and in itself essentially harmonious.

Yet we dare hardly venture, like many of

the Italians, to consider Metastasio in the character of a tragedian; nor ought he to be held out as a model to other nations, in any species of composition, but that of the opera. His poetry must not be divested, for a moment, of its musical attractions; nor ought it to be put into the mouth of tragic actors, as is too often the case, at present, in Italy. It makes no pretensions to real tragedy; and if placed in competition with that, to which it cannot, in justice, be compared, we should, doubtless, be compelled to admit its improbabilities, its want of consistency, and the effeminacy of the manners, which it depicts. Viewed in this light, the musical drama is confessedly inferior. We feel that the object of tragedy is to call forth the most powerful emotions, by pictures of human fate and wretchedness; and we know that no feelings can be thus deep and powerful, which are not essentially founded in nature and in truth. It is the duty of the tragic poet to transport us at once into the very place he has chosen, to make us the witness of some terrific action. Here we expect to find places, manners, prejudices, and passions, every thing in union together, as a consistent whole. We must be made to breathe, as it were, the very atmosphere, glowing with the words and spirit of the heroes, contending with their destiny around

us. This was the triumph of the Greek theatre; and this the Germans have also succeeded in effecting. The grand failure of the French tragedians, as it has generally been supposed, was in giving to all the great personages of antiquity, the precise language and sentiments of their own countrymen. They were doubtless wrong, but this error by no means approaches in importance to that of having produced mere ideal characters. We can indulge in some degree of sympathy for the former, in whom, as soon as we forget their names, a living truth of character appears; but the latter we are unable to comprehend, inasmuch as they are without a prototype in nature.

In order to convey as correct an idea of the drama of Metastasio, by means of specimens and translations, as it lies in my power to do, I propose to give, in the first place, a minute analysis of one of his most finished pieces. It is entitled *Hypsipyle;* and it may serve to explain the fabric of the Italian opera, in its varieties of incident and character. We could not proceed to try that succession of very brilliant and striking situations, and of novel events, with which the poet has crowded his drama, by any severe and critical standard, without speedily detecting the glaring improbability and the want of skill apparent throughout his whole composition.

The analysis we now propose, and which may appear somewhat invidious, it will, therefore, be superfluous to repeat in other instances, which would merely present us with the same defects; and we shall endeavour to present our readers only with what we find most beautiful in the rest of his dramas.

The play of *Hypsipyle* is, perhaps, one of the most poetical. It combines more of a romantic interest; and as the danger, to which the leading characters are exposed, is very well supported, it, for this reason, keeps alive the anxiety and attention of the spectators. The versification is, likewise, very superior to most of the same class, and the dialogue is, by turns, equally touching, eloquent, and impassioned. To enjoy it, as we ought, we must create for ourselves an illusion, which may serve to disguise the many improbabilities of facts and character; and, abandoning ourselves to its impulses, we must wander through an ideal world where every thing is new, and where even moral laws take their source in other principles.

The scene of *Hypsipyle* is placed in Lemnos. The theatre represents the temple of Bacchus, whose rites are about to be celebrated. Hypsipyle appears with her confidant Rhodope, armed in the character of Bacchantes. The fatal oath, engaging her to a frightful conspiracy of

the Lemnian women, has just passed her lips. It is to massacre the whole Lemnian army, on the eve of its return from a long expedition into Thrace. The princess, who had only feigned to approve of the plot, commands Rhodope to hasten towards the shore, to prevent, if possible, her father, King Thoas, from disembarking; but it is too late, and Eurynome, one of the most desperate Bacchantes, who originated the project of assassinating all their brothers and husbands, announces the arrival of Thoas. She stirs up the fury of the Bacchantes, by exciting their jealousy, and gives final orders for the massacre, which is to be executed during the night. Hypsipyle encourages it, and seems, by her language, more ferocious than Eurynome herself. We look in vain for a motive to this dissimulation, which only favours the projects of Eurynome, and ends in the death of the unfortunate Lemnians; whilst the measures taken by Hypsipyle to save her father are unaccountable; as she waits for the landing of Thoas, before she thinks of entrusting the young princess, her confidant, with the care of detaining him in the port. The speech of Eurynome is certainly very beautiful. It has the twofold merit of expressing the eloquent feeling of the moment, and of explaining to the spectator the motives and the mysteries of this strange conspiracy, in such a manner as to give them at least an air of probability.

Most noble Princess, *(To Rhodope)*
And you, brave comrades of our enterprize,
Lo! from the Thracian shores once more returning,
The faithless Lemnians claim their native soil.
But, be it ours to visit their offences
With vengeance due. True, they return, but how?
Have not three summer suns
Witness'd our harvest toils
Neglected and unaided? Now they come
To give the offspring of their stolen embraces
Into your laps; while each barbarian mistress,
Wild as the savage beast, whose milk she drew,
With painted visage mocks your slighted charms.
Revenge, revenge our wrongs!
We have vow'd it, and our vow must be fulfill'd.*

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* Eurinome.
Rodope, Principessa,
Valorose compagne, a queste arene
Dalle sponde di Tracia, a noi ritorno
Fanno i Lenni infedeli. A noi s' aspetta
Del sesso vilipeso
L' oltraggio vendicar. Tornan gl' ingrati,
Ma dopo aver tre volte
Viste da noi lontano
Le messi rinnovar. Tornano a noi,
Ma ci portan sugli occhi
De' talami furtivi i frutti infami;
E le barbare amiche
Dipinte il volto, e di ferigno latte
Avezzate a nutrirsi, adesso altere
Della vostra beltà vinta e negletta.
Ah vendetta, vendetta!
La giurammo; s' adempia. Al gran disegno
Tutto cospira, l' opportuna notte,

Fortune looks smiling on,
And favouring night her curtain lends
To shield our enterprise. While the glad god,
Whose noisy rites we celebrate,
With joyous songs shall drown their feeble cries.
Let fathers, sons, and brothers,
And falsest consorts, in one fate be buried.
For us, be ours the glory or the blame;
A proud example to the ingrate race
Of woman's wrath, for violated faith.

Thoas arrives with his Lemnians; but Hypsipyle ventures not to return his caresses. Full of grief, she beholds him surrounded by his soldiers; a word from his daughter's mouth would save him and his valiant companions from an ignominious death, by an open combat with the women, which could not long be doubtful. There is, moreover, nothing to excuse the whimsical indignation of the Lemnian ladies. The character of Thoas has all the qualities of manly prudence, kindness, and protection. The language given

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La stanchezza de' rei, del Dio di Nasso
Il rito strepitoso, onde confuse
Fian le querule voci
Fra le grida festive. *I padri, i figli,*
I germani, i *consorti*
Cadano estinti; e sia fra *noi commune*
Il merito ò la colpa. *Il grande esempio*
De' femminili sdegni,
Al sesso ingrato a serbar fede insegni.

Atto I. Sc. 2.

him by the poet attracts us by the paternal affection it displays; but a different character would have thrown a greater air of probability over the conspiracy of which he is made the victim.

THOAS. Long loved, and loved in vain,
Come to a father's arms, my child, my daughter.
I cannot tell how sad and wearily
The weight of my long years has on me press'd,
Since thus I fondly held you to my breast.
Now you again are near me; now I feel
The burden of my years sit light and easy
Upon an old man's head.
HYPSIP. My heart will break. *(Aside)*
THOAS. But why so sad and silent,
My only girl? and why so strangely cold—
A father just restored?
HYPSIP. Alas! you know not,
My Lord—*

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* TOANTE.

Vieni, O dolce mia cura,
Vieni al paterno sen: da te lontano,
Tutto degli anni miei sentiva il peso;
E tutto, o figlia, io sento
Or che appresso mi sei
Il peso alleggerir degli anni miei.
ISSIP. (Mi si divide il cor.)
TOANTE. Perchè ritrovo
Issipile si mesta?
Qual mai freddezza è questa
All' arrivo d' un padre?
ISSIP. Ah tu non sai . . .
Signor . . .

ROD. Ah, silence! *(To Issipile)*
HYPSIP. Ye gods, what torture! *(Aside)*
EURIN. Her weakness will betray me! *(Aside)*
THOAS. And is it my return
That grieves you thus?
HYPSIP. Would you could read my heart!
THOAS. Nay, tell me all!
HYPSIP. Ye gods!
THOAS. What is 't that moves you? Speak!
Can th' hymeneal rites, which the young prince
Hastens from Thessaly to celebrate,
Displease my daughter?
HYPSIP. No, sire; from the moment
I saw him first, I loved him.
THOAS. Can it be
You fear to lose the power my absence gave you?

ROD. Taci
ISSIP. (Che pena!)
EURIN. (Ah, mi tradisce
La debolezza sua!)
TOANTE. La mia presenza
Ti funesta cosi?
ISSIP. Non vedi il core;
Perciò . . .
TOANTE. Spiegati.
ISSIP. Oh Dio!
TOANTE. Spiegati, O figlia;
Se l' imeneo ti spiace
Del prence di Tessaglia
Che a momentf verrà . . .
ISSIP. Dal primo istante
Che il vidi l' adorai.
TOANTE. Forse in mia vece
Avvezzata a regnar, temi che sia

Fear not. No longer sovereign prince or king
Am I. Still govern at your pleasure here,
Reward, and punish.—No desire have I,
But here to live, and in your arms to die.

In the mean while, Thoas and the Lemnians retire to rest, and Hypsipyle repeats her promise to assassinate her father. Eurynome now unfolds the cause of her desperate attempt. Her object is to avenge her son Learchus, who having made an attempt to carry off Hypsipyle, had been banished by Thoas, and was believed to have died in exile. Eurynome next hastens to give orders for beginning the massacre; but at the moment she disappears, Learchus enters upon the scene, where he meets Rhodope, who had formerly bestowed her affections upon him. She eagerly beseeches him to fly from a place where every man is doomed to destruction. Learchus will not be persuaded to believe her. As the captain of a band of pirates, he has entered Lemnos for the purpose of preventing the nuptials of Jason, the Prince of Thessaly, who is every moment expected to lead

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Termine di tuo regno il mio ritorno?
T' inganni. Io quì non sono
Più sovràno nè Rè. Punisci, assolvi,
Ordina premi e pene: altro non bramo,
Issipile adorata!
Che viver teco, e che morirti accanto.

Atto I. Sc. 3.

Hypsipyle to the altar. Learchus introduces himself into the palace gardens, whither Hypsipyle, in a short time, conducts her father, for the purpose of concealing him from the fury of the Bacchantes. Their conversation is overheard by Learchus, who finds that Rhodope had not deceived him. He now seeks to draw away Thoas by a stratagem, and to appear in his place, with the view of carrying off Hypsipyle, who had retired, as soon as she returns to seek her father. In fact, he addresses himself to Thoas, entreating him, for his daughter's sake, to conceal himself elsewhere, assuring him that his retreat is already discovered; and, on Thoas retiring, he himself enters the thicket in his stead.

The scene is afterwards changed. Eurynome announces to her infatuated countrywomen, who are assembled in the Temple of Vengeance, that an armed man had been observed in the precincts of the palace; "but the Lemnian heroines," she continues, "have surrounded him, and, I doubt not, will soon prove victorious." It was Jason; and the next moment he appears, sword in hand, pursuing the Lemnian ladies, whom he had completely put to the rout. He is astonished to find Eurynome and Hypsipyle busily employed in organizing these Amazonian culprits. He, nevertheless, accosts his betrothed bride in the most affecting and impassioned language; and is received with no less tenderness on her part. But

his surprise is changed into horror, when he hears of the slaughter, which has just taken place, of all the Lemnians, and of the assassination of the king by the hands of his own adored and beautiful bride. Hypsipyle, herself, confirms a recital, which in the eyes of her lover overwhelms her with disgrace. She had even taken the precaution to place a disfigured corpse upon the couch of Thoas, in order to deceive the conspirators. Jason hastens from this scene of blood, disgusted at the unnatural wickedness of the bride, whom he had flown to embrace.

The second act opens with the appearance of Eurynome during the night in the palace gardens, where Hypsipyle had concealed her father.

Eur. Alas! whichever way I turn,
Some fatal object meets my eyes,
Kindling again my passions into madness.
'Midst these deep solitudes
I strive to lose the dread remorse,
Which still, where'er I fly, intrudes.
Tell me, ye awful scenes!
The spirit of my boy no longer wanders
Sad, unavenged, on the Lethean strand;
That now his mournful shade may pass the wave,
And taste the rest his mother's vengeance gave.*

Eur. Ah! che per tutto io veggo
Qualche oggetto funesto
Che rinfaccia a quest' alma i suoi furori!
Voi, solitari orrori,
Da' seguaci rimorsi

The son, to whom she here appeals, is at her side in the same retreat; but this piratical chief is, in truth, more cowardly than a woman. He shews himself with the utmost fear, and retreats again at the least noise. His voice increases the anguish of Eurynome, who recognizes that of her son. Hypsipyle now arrives to withdraw her father from the place of his retreat; and she informs Learchus, whom she mistakes for Thoas, of the preparations she had made for flight. Eurynome, hearing her intention, hastens to summon the Bacchantes; while Learchus, alarmed at the sudden flash of lights, makes his escape before he can be discovered. Eurynome gives orders for the grove to be surrounded by the Bacchanals; and for the retreats on all sides to be explored and set fire to; when, just at the moment she expects to stab Thoas with her own hand, Learchus is brought forward, and falls at her feet. This incident possesses theatrical effect, which might be considered as striking, had Metastasio employed it less frequently. The Bacchantes are supposed to insist upon the king's death; but they, in reality, say nothing; whilst Rhodope, still in love with Learchus, comes forward, under

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Difendete il mio cor. Ditemi voi
Che per me più non erra invendicata
L'ombra del figlio mio; che più di Lete
Non sospira il tragitto;
E che val la sua pace il mio delitto.

pretence of hastening his punishment, with the intention of saving his life. She contrives to lead Eurynome away, and orders her companions to make preparations for the public sacrifice; remaining, unaccompanied, to keep guard over Learchus. As soon, however, as the women have departed, she restores him to liberty. If the Lemnian ladies were to be thus easily imposed upon, surely Hypsipyle needed not to have invented so many unreasonable and fatal artifices.

The scene again changes; and Jason is seen, at sunrise, on the seashore, at a little distance from his slumbering companions in arms. After a monologue, in which he reproaches Hypsipyle for her perfidy and cruelty, wearied with long watching, he falls asleep upon the ground. Learchus here approaches him, and beholds his rival at his feet, unarmed and alone. He draws his dagger to despatch him, when Hypsipyle, suddenly arriving, arrests the blow, threatening to alarm Jason. She obliges him to deliver up his arms; but Learchus is revenged upon her by himself awakening Jason, and crying out that he is betrayed. The Thessalian prince starts up; beholds Hypsipyle with a dagger in her hand, and doubts not for a moment, that she, who had assassinated her father, is now aiming at her lover's life. In vain she attempts to exculpate herself, and to inform him of the truth; Jason appears to listen to her with horror, and rejects her

caresses with disgust. She is scarcely gone, before Thoas, approaching Jason, convinces him, by his appearance and conversation, of the entire innocence of Hypsipyle. Jason immediately rouses his companions. He swears to snatch Hypsipyle from the palace, and from the power of these furies; to solicit her forgiveness, and to take vengeance for the blood which the Lemnian women have shed.

In the beginning of the third act, we have the prospect of a solitary place, not far from the seashore, where Learchus is lying in ambuscade, together with two of his piratical followers. Thoas, whose anxiety has drawn him out of the tents of Jason, is approaching near; but Learchus, with his two followers, judging himself no match for the old king, despatches his comrades for more assistance, while he attempts to amuse Thoas until their return. He pretends to make a confession, and to intreat the king's forgiveness of his crimes; and on receiving pardon, he takes his hand in token of reconciliation. The next moment Thoas is surrounded by the pirates; and Learchus, suddenly changing his tone, calls on him to surrender. Such are these variations of fortune, called by the Italians, *di bei colpi di scena;* fine theatrical strokes; and which are of much the same nature in the action of a piece, as the *concetti* in regard to style. In truth, the language made use of in these surprising turns,

is imbued with many of the same defects: we have enough of spirit and of elevation of manner, but nothing natural and true. They are followed by the plaudits of the theatre; we admire and we recur to them; but the frequent antitheses give them a peculiar air of affectation. Thus Learchus says to the king, who despises life:

LEAR. Nay, these are dreams!
There is no thing so vile
But loves to live. 'Tis a deceitful wile,
A tale told only to the ideot throng,
Of heroes' hearts firm amidst utter woe;
And thine (I read thy soul) is trembling now.

The reply of Thoas is almost a parody of the preceding passage:

THOAS. Are they dreams?
I know thou canst not be at peace;
For virtue with ourselves is born,
Whose love, though spurn'd, deserts us never;
And whips those faults, from which it fails to shield us.
It is Heaven's voice! and if we hear it not,
Woe to us; for the very worst of evils
Is when the sinner bears within his heart
The longing after good, the sense of right,
Even in his own despite.
I read thy soul, and know ev'n now it trembles.

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* LEARCO. Fole son queste.
Ogni animal che vive
Ama di conservarsi; arte che inganna
Solo il credulo volgo, è la fermezza

In the mean while Rhodope, who saw Thoas borne away by the pirates, and Hypsipyle, informed of the fact, have recourse to Jason's assistance, and excite him to vengeance. The scene is altered; and we behold the sea-port, where the ships of Learchus are at anchor. Learchus, with the captive Thoas, is already on board; while Jason, Hypsipyle, and Rhodope appear in pursuit of them, with the Argonauts. Jason wishes instantly to attack the ships of the enemy; but Learchus, standing upon the deck, threatens to despatch Thoas with the weapon which he holds suspended over the old man's head. He refuses to restore his prisoner until Hypsipyle shall surrender herself into his hands. This, Hypsipyle, notwithstanding her own fears, and the opposition

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Che affetano gli eroi ne' casi estremi.
Io ti leggo nell' alma e so che tremi.

. . . . . .

TOANTE. Fole son queste?
Tranquillo esser non puoi;
So che nasce con noi
L'amor della virtù. Quando non basta
Ad evitar le colpe,
Basta almeno a punirle. E' un don del cielo
Che diventa castigo
Per chi ne abusa. Il più crudel tormento
Ch' hanno i malvagi, è il conservar nel core
Ancora a lor dispetto,
L' idea del giusto, e dell' onesto i semi.
Io ti leggo nell' alma, e so che tremi.

Atto III. Sc. 1.

of Thoas and of Jason, resolves to do; and slowly approaches the pirate's vessel. Jason then observes Eurynome, who is in search of her son Learchus; and seizing her, he threatens to kill her, unless Thoas is set at liberty. The two victims are trembling under the knives of their respective assassins, on each side of the stage. When this spectacle has been exhibited a sufficient time, Learchus yields, and agrees to exchange Thoas for his mother; and, as if to carry the improbability of all this to its highest point, after expressing remorse, and reproaching himself for this act of virtue, he stabs himself, for the weakness he has shewn, and throws himself into the sea.

Few dramas exhibit greater study of theatrical effect than *Hypsipyle;* and, if we except its total want of probability, without requiring of the author to account in a natural manner for the incidents introduced, few, perhaps, will be found that possess a greater degree of interest. But the same theatrical surprises are repeated, until they weary the patience of his audience. We see the dagger at the throat of a father, a mother, a son, or a beauty; and the same laconic reply is given to all the finest speeches in the piece, *vieni o l' uccido:* Approach! or he dies. We have, also, convenient liberators, with the weapons which they have just snatched from the real assassins in their

hands, and who are themselves accused of the crime; and mothers, who persuading themselves that they are in pursuit of their worst enemy, find an only son in his place; but not until they have brought him into the extremest jeopardy. Such materials are the common property of Italian tragedy. The incidents and characters are all ready drawn out, and the situations capable of being transferred elsewhere without distinction of time or place; thus rendering the drama of modern Italy so easy a production, that every troop of players makes a point of entertaining its own poet; and we are assured that more than a single specimen of the serious opera has really proceeded from the pen of a shoemaker. Metastasio's characters are, likewise, brought upon the scene, with more tedious repetition than even the incidents and situations of his pieces. A total want of national interest, and too great exaggeration of the different virtues and vices of the personages he displays, admit of little variety in the poet's characters. We are never presented with any of those half-villains, or half-virtuous people so frequently met with elsewhere. The author takes it for granted, that one vice is followed by all the rest in the decalogue, and that it is impossible for a virtuous character to commit a single fault; insomuch that he equally fails to excite our sympathy in the transcendent villains,

and in those immaculate characters, who invariably triumph over their passions, after the struggle of a moment. We shall perceive, in treating of the Italian comedy, the same resemblance between the different masks, and the uniform manner in which Pantaloon, Harlequin, and Columbine are made to support the same character, in all the comedies in which they appear. They are, indeed, the same persons, placed in different circumstances, as best suits the convenience of the author. The more serious Italian opera was framed upon a similar model. It admits only of a limited number of masks upon the scene, each of which is the original type and essence of a fixed and stated character: such as that of the tyrant, the good king, the hot-headed hero, the plaintive lover, and the faithful friend. On these personages the author invariably confers foreign names and dresses, while he gives them no other characteristics of the nation to which they belong. We have a Greek, a Roman, a Persian, or a Scythian; but if their individual costume were changed, the dramatic action attributed to each would be quite as suitable to the inhabitants of the opposite end of the world.

Metastasio began his career by a piece entitled *Dido abandoned by Æneas*, founded upon no very favourable subject; out of which he failed to elicit the degree of interest of which it might have been rendered susceptible. The Æneas

whom he holds out as his hero, is a disgusting character; but the charm of the versification, even in this first attempt, had the effect of raising him far above his competitors. This favourable impression was increased by his succeeding efforts; and in 1729, his reputation procured for him an order from the Emperor Charles VI. to attend, as Imperial poet, at Vienna, to replace Apostolo Zeno who now wished to retire to Venice. There Metastasio continued to reside, in the service of the court, till an advanced old age. He died on the twelfth day of April, 1782, in his eighty-fourth year. Nine of his pieces, which were composed during the first ten years of his residence at Vienna, are held in much higher estimation than the remainder. These consist of his *Issipile*, *Olimpiade*, *Demofoonte*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, *Achille*, *Ciro*, *Temistocle*, *Zenobia*, and *Regolo*. Of a few of these we propose to give some account, as well with a view to their general merits, as to the more particular excellencies which they display, but we shall avoid repeating the irksome task of following them scene by scene.

The *Olimpiade* is of a soft and impassioned character throughout; the style extremely pure; with little probability of incident, and little nature except in the passion of love. The scene is placed amidst the Olympic games, where the poet supposes Clisthenes, king of Sicyon, to

preside. The king has given his daughter Aristea as a prize to the victor in the wrestling-match. There are two friends, Lycidas and Megacles, in love with Aristea, the former of whom has had no experience in the Olympic combats, while the latter has frequently been victorious in the wrestling ring. Lycidas had formerly saved the life of Megacles, who now wishes to enter the arena, and to win the disputed beauty for his friend, and in his friend's name. A similar situation of the characters is introduced in another of Metastasio's pieces, founded on chivalric manners, and borrowed from Ariosto, under the name of Ruggiero and Bradamante. Megacles disguises from his friend the passion which he entertains for the fair Aristea; he enters the lists, is victorious over all competitors, and yielding the prize into the arms of his friend, precipitates himself into the river, to avoid seeing the object of his passion in the embraces of another. The catastrophe is, nevertheless, brought about favourably for all parties. A fisherman snatches Megacles from the waves; Argene, formerly deserted by Lycidas, inspires him with renewed passion while present at the games; and Lycidas is finally discovered to be the son of Clisthenes, and brother to Aristea. As hope can no longer be here indulged, the two pair of lovers are united agreeably to the dictates of their first passion.

The *Olimpiade* appears to me to excel all the other pieces of which Metastasio can boast, in point of impassioned eloquence. In the scene between Megacles and Aristea, in which he acquaints her with his triumph, but that he has triumphed for another instead of himself, and in which he offers the sacrifice of both at the shrine of friendship, the interest assumes a high and pathetic tone. The farewell of Megacles to the object of his love and to his friend, is expressed in the most eloquent and impassioned language, the close of which falls into a sweet air, to which Cimarosa has given an effect beyond the power of mere human words to produce. Music appears to have lavished upon it the utmost tenderness of which the art is susceptible, and expresses the most delicate varieties and shades of feeling with an eloquence of which words can convey but a faint impression. The quatrain with which the air closes: *Che abisso di pene:* is a burst of grief which opens the innermost recesses of the bosom to a feeling of despair.

It would be quite impossible to convey an idea, in feeble prose, of the united effect of the finest poetry and music. But we must, at least, attempt to catch a portion of the thoughts and sentiments thus exquisitely embodied, were it only to exhibit the powers of Metastasio, as a faithful and natural delineator of passion.

MEG. This is the mystery—
You know the secret now—the Prince of Crete
Dies to possess you. He implores my pity;
He saved my life—How can I spurn his prayer?
ARIST. You fought—
MEG. It was for him.
ARIST. Ah! would you lose me?
MEG. Yes! to preserve my honour, and remain
Still worthy of your love.
ARIST. And I must therefore—
MEG. Crown the great work, most generous, most adored.
O, Aristea, help the grateful throbs
Of my torn heart, and be to Lycidas
All thou hast been to me. Yes, love him, love him!
He is deserving of such infinite bliss:
We have been one in heart;
If thou art his, we do not wholly part.*

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* MEG. Tutto l'arcano
Ecco ti svelo. Il principe di Creta
Langue per te d'amor. Pietà mi chiede,
E la vita mi diede. Ah! principessa,
Se negarla poss' io, dillo tu stessa.
ARIST. E pugnasti—
MEG. Per lui.
ARIST. Perder mi vuoi—
MEG. Sì, per serbarmi sempre
Degno di te.
ARIST. Dunque io dovrò—
MEG. Tu dei
Coronar l'opra mia. Sì, generosa,
Adorata Aristea, seconda i moti
D' un grato cor. Sia qual io fui fin ora,
Licida in avvenire. Amalo. È degno
Di sì gran sorte il caro amico. Anch' io

ARIST. What have you said? Am I, indeed, so fallen
From my bright heaven of hopes, to the abyss
Of wretchedness? It cannot be. No! find him
Some nobler recompense; for without you
Life is not life.
MEG. Yet must I say adieu.
Do not thou also, beauteous Aristea,
Tempt me to be a traitor to my virtue.
Too dreadful are the pangs of this resolve;
And now the least of these sweet fond emotions
Makes all my efforts vain.
ARIST. Alas! you leave me—
MEG. It is too true.
ARIST. True, dost thou say? and when?
MEG. This, this, ('tis worse than death to utter it,)
This is my last farewell.

Vivo di lui nel seno;
E s' ei t' acquista, io non ti perdo appieno.
ARIST. Ah, qual passaggio è questo! Io dalle stelle
Precipito agli abissi. Ah, no; si cerchi
Miglior compenso. Ah! senza te la vita
Per me vita non è.
MEG. Bella Aristea,
Non congiurar tu ancora
Contro la mia virtù. Mi costa assai
Il prepararmi a sì gran passo. Un solo
Di quei teneri sensi
Quant' opera distrugge!
ARIST. E di lasciarmi—
MEG. Ho risoluto.
ARIST. Hai risoluto? e quando?
MEG. Questo (morir mi sento)
Questo è l'ultimo addìo.

ARIST. The last! Ungrateful!
Help me, ye gods—I sink into the earth;
Cold damps are on my brow; I feel a hand,
A chilly hand, oppress my very heart.
. . . . . .
MEG. Me miserable! what do I behold?
Her grief hath killed her. Gentle love, look on me;
Do not, bright Aristea, thus yield up
Thy nobler self. Hear! Megacles is with thee;
I will not leave thee. Ah! she does not heed me.
Are there more woes in store for me, ye gods?
Farewell, farewell, for ever.
And may the Fates be kinder
To thee, love, than to me!
Ye gods, preserve your noblest work below.
And the bright days I lose, on her bestow!
My Lycidas, O hear:

ARIST. L'ultimo! ingrato—
Soccorretemi, o Numi! il piè vacilla:
Freddo sudor mi bagna il volto; e parmi
Ch' una gelida man m' opprima il core.
. . . . . .
MEG. Misero me, che veggo!
Ah, l' oppresse il dolor! Cara mia speme,
Bella Aristea, non avvilirti; ascolta:
Megacle è quì, non partirò. Sarai—
Che parlo? Ella non m' ode. Avete, o stelle,
Più sventure per me?—
—Addìo, mia vita; addìo,
Mia perduta speranza. Il ciel ti renda
Più felice di me. Deh! conservate
Questa bell' opra vostra, eterni Dei,
E i dì ch' io perderò, donate a lei.
——Licida, ah senti.

My fate would she discover,
And say; Where is he fled?
Then answer thou: Thy lover,
Thine hapless friend, is dead.
Yet no! a grief so bitter
She shall not feel. Oh say,
He sorely wept to quit her,
And weeping, went his way.
O mighty gulf of woe!
To leave my love, my heart!
For evermore to part!
To part, and leave her so.

We discern, likewise, in the *Olimpiade*, an attempt to give a more distinct expression to the characters of the piece. Lycidas is not altogether, like the others, a perfect hero; but gives signs of impatience and presumption, peculiar to himself. Strength of character may, however, be considered as a superfluous quality in most operas; for the events are so far out of the reach of the

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Se cerca, se dice:
L' amico dov' è?
L' amico infelice,
Rispondi, morì.
Ah! no! sì gran duolo
Non darle per me:
Rispondi, ma solo;
Piangendo partì.
Che abisso di pene!
Lasciare il suo bene
Lasciarlo per sempre,
Lasciarlo così!

Olimpiade, Atto II. Sc. 9.

influence of the personages engaged in them, that did they assume a character quite opposite to that assigned to them, the result would be precisely the same. It is probably true, that, by this character of Lycidas, Metastasio wished to explain his last rash action. He rushes, like a madman, into the temple, attacks the king, and is about to kill him, when he feels himself restrained by a sudden feeling of respect, and by a sort of supernatural presentiment of his birth, frequently dignified by the name of the voice of nature, but, in fact, more nearly resembling the voice of the theatre, or the voice of romance. The whole of the conduct attributed to Lycidas is, nevertheless, quite inexplicable, and his indignation as much so as his respect. But it was convenient to the author, as the source of one of those grand *colpi di scena*, or dramatic surprises, so much applauded by the people of Italy. The king condemns Lycidas to death, while he is full of compassion for his victim; and every thing is prepared for his execution, when he recognizes him as his own son. Then, with an excess of magnanimity, as little agreeable to reason as to sound morality, the king declares:

> And shall I dare to say the path of crime
> Is open to my race?' Each one of you *

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* Clistene. È forse
La libertà dei falli
Permessa al sangue mio? Qui viene ogni altro
Valore a dimostrar: l'unico esempio

Hath proved his virtue, and shall I alone
Be feeble in the contest? This, of me,
The world shall never hear. Upon your altars
Kindle, ye priests, the sacred fire!
And thou, my son, go forth, and die!
Soon to be follow'd by thy wretched sire.

The fatal order is, however, deferred, on a representation being made to his Majesty that he is, indeed, the King of Sicyon, but not of Olympia; that his authority was confined to the late games; and that it rests with the people to dispose of the prisoner. The people, or in other words, the chorus, pronounce the pardon of Lycidas.

It is also observable of the mythology of the opera, that all the punishments consist of sacrifices offered in honour of the gods; and that, agreeably to this system, an innocent victim is always considered as more valuable than one already stained with blood. We may be allowed to question whether this creed ever prevailed among the ancient pagans; but it is, at least, a convenient one for poets, whom it has supplied, since the time of Guarini, with many noble scenes of poetical devotion. We thus behold Megacles and Argene successively claiming the right of dying for Lycidas; and the same

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Esser degg' io di debolezza? Ah, questo
Di me non oda il mondo. Olà, ministri,
Risvegliate su l' ara il sacro foco;
Va, figlio, e mori. Anch' io morrò fra poco.

Atto III. Sc. 10.

sacrifice has been frequently repeated in all the theatres of Italy. It is by the entreaties of Argene, and by the proofs which she brings forward of her former relations with Lycidas, that he is discovered to be the son of Clisthenes.

Metastasio was not a little indebted to Guarini, as has already been remarked; but it is more particularly in his *Demofoonte* that he approaches the author of the *Pastor Fido*. The plot, and especially the introductory scene, have a very near resemblance. This play is founded upon the tradition of human sacrifices, celebrated in obedience to the ancient oracles of Thrace, the continuance of which depended on some enigmatical event, which could alone remove the cruel tribute enacted by the gods; upon barbaric laws, which condemned to death the woman who should venture to espouse the hereditary prince without the king's consent; upon the double substitutions of children, and double recognitions; and upon an elaborate structure of mythological romance, not transmitted to us by antiquity, and so little in unison with its usages and manners, as to place it even beyond the pale of our belief. The piece is not, however, destitute of interest; inasmuch as Metastasio uniformly expresses the passions of a lover, a spouse, or a mother, in natural and pathetic language; but it is the perpetual recurrence to dramatic common-places, so inconsistent with the dictates of

real nature; and the stale magnanimity of heroes devoting themselves for each other, which throw such an air of tedious improbability over the whole.

We have hitherto pursued the career of Metastasio, in the province of mingled fable and history; and have seen him treating subjects which permitted him to transpose, to embellish, and to adapt them to the purposes of the opera, which he had always in view. But he has occasionally introduced the history of times, with which we are presumed to be somewhat better acquainted; times which are, perhaps, more in unison with the interests of the tragic drama, in which the impression of truth adds so much to the emotion, than to the opera, in which we merely rest upon illusions to which we readily yield belief, provided they do not actually come in contact with our experience of previous facts. Among his historical productions, *La Clemenza di Tito* is one of those held in the highest estimation, the subject of which, with very slight difference, is the same as that of *Cinna*. It embraces, like the latter, a conspiracy against a generous sovereign, directed by a female hand. But in Corneille there are, at least, old Roman and heroic principles, which put weapons into the hands of the conspirators. A just vengeance is the object of some; the love of liberty and of their country animates others; and Cinna alone is represented as entangled and driven on by his mis-

tress. In Metastasio every thing is put into action by artificial wires; by the motives and passions best adapted to the interest of the opera. Vitellia, secretly in love with Titus, prevails upon Sextus, to enter into a conspiracy against him, only that she may be revenged upon him for his preference of the charms of Berenice. She is, in fact, the Hermione of this new Orestes. Sextus is the friend of Titus, and has not even the shadow of a complaint against him, for Titus is the best of men, and Metastasio is an excellent painter of those faultless monsters without a spot. Indeed, there is a peculiar kind of effeminacy in the character of the poet, very favourable to the expression of goodness and tenderness of soul. Titus always appears with a gentle, confiding, and even fondling manner; his generosity surpasses that of Augustus; it is beyond all limits; but it would produce a greater impression did it proceed from a somewhat firmer character, and if the dignity of the sovereign were allowed to mingle with the kindness of the friend. Love is always so far the acting principle of all Metastasio's pieces, that death nowhere appears under a more serious aspect than in the speeches of his lovers. They speak of it, and menace each other with it incessantly. But, in the midst of the most terrible agitation which the word may appear to excite, we feel a tolerably comfortable conviction that all is not meant that meets the ear. The rage of Vitellia,

the daggers of Sextus, and even the conflagration of the Capitol itself, have altogether such a tempered fury, as will not suffer us to be really alarmed. In this piece, as well as in the preceding, those grand struggles of generosity are repeated, until they weary the mind. Annius, a friend of Sextus, renounces his mistress Servilia in favour of Titus; while Servilia, on her side, renounces the throne of Titus for the love of Annius. The latter, having exchanged dresses with Sextus, carries on his robe the conspirator's badge, and receives the accusations of the object of his affections and of his prince, who take him for a traitor, without a reply. Sextus, who is, in his turn, discovered, is also silent, in spite of the most pressing intreaties of Titus, in order that he may not involve Vitellia. We must, nevertheless, admit that these two last incidents have a more probable appearance, and are of a less conventional nature in themselves, than some of the preceding; while they are, at the same time, treated in a very delicate and touching manner. These are the passages in Metastasio which draw tears; but they are always the tears of tenderness and of passion. No profound emotions of grief or terror are ever excited in us. He only relaxes and attenuates the fibres of the soul, and when he has rendered them sufficiently weak and flaccid, he surprises us into tears of the opera, which have nothing in common with those due to genuine tragedy.

This peculiar softness and sensibility may, perhaps, be well exemplified in the concluding lines addressed by Sextus to Vitellia, at the moment when he thinks he is about to suffer death for her sake:

If you should feel upon your cheek
Some breath, like Zephyr, wandering nigh,
Oh say: This is the parting sigh
Of the fond youth who dies for me!
Your lover's spirit hovering near,
Shall find a balm for every tear
And sorrow past, to hear you kindly speak. *

When Titus afterwards wishes to draw from Sextus an avowal of his fault, the gentleness of the one, and the sufferings of the other, are both very finely expressed.

Titus. Hear me, O Sextus!
Think not your sovereign speaks: He is not here.
Now open all your heart, as friend to friend:
Believe my word, Augustus shall not hear it. †

---

* Se mai senti spirarti sul volto
Lieve fiato che lento s' aggiri,
Dì: son questi gli estremi sospiri
Del mio fido che muore per me.
Al mio spirto dal seno disciolto
La memoria di tanti martiri
Sarà dolce con questa mercè.

Atto II. Sc. 15.

† Tito. Odimi, o Sesto!
Siam soli; il tuo sovrano
Non è presente. Apri il tuo core a Tito;
Confidati all' amico. Io ti prometto

Give me the reasons of your crime. Together
Let us find means of pardon—no less pleasure
To Titus than to Sextus.

SEX. I say nothing!
My fault admits of no defence.

TITUS. At least,
Grant it, in friendship. I have not concealed
From you the nearest secrets of my state,
And surely merit some return of confidence
From Sextus.

SEX. This is torment, such as never (*Aside*)
Was known before: either I must offend him,
Or worse, betray Vitellia.

TITUS. Doubt you still?
Sextus, you wound my heart;
You outrage friendship, and insult the friend.

Che Augusto nol saprà. Del tuo delitto
Dì la prima cagion. Cerchiamo insieme
Una via di scusarti. Io ne sarei
Forse di te più lieto.

SESTO. Ah! la mia colpa
Non ha difesa.

TITO. In contracambio almeno
D' amicizia lo chiedo. Io non celai
A la tua fede i più gelosi arcani;
Merito ben che Sesto
Mi fidi un suo segreto.

SESTO. (Ecco una nuova
Spezie di pena! o dispiacere a Tito
O Vitellia accusar.)

TITO. Dubiti ancora?
Ma, Sesto, mi ferisci
Nel più vivo del cor. Vedi che troppo
Tu l' amicizia oltraggi

With these unkind suspicions. Think once more,
And grant my just request.
SEX. What fatal sign
Cast its malignant influence on my birth!

This play is dedicated to the Emperor Charles VI.; the same who, in the year 1714, delivered up the faithful and unfortunate Catalonians to the ferocious vengeance of Louis XIV. and of Philip V., leaving thousands of victims to perish on the scaffold, sacrificed in his cause. Yet Metastasio can say, "I had not ventured thus to describe you, were you not universally recognized in the character of Titus; and is the poet accountable for the strong resemblance? If you would avoid every where meeting with your own likeness, you must command the Muses, O victorious Augustus, no longer to sing the exploits of heroes."

It is difficult to ascertain how far these specimens and translations of the original may serve to convey a just idea of Metastasio, to such of my readers as are unacquainted with the Italian language. With a genius embracing so many opposite qualities, I may, very possibly, have scarcely succeeded in shewing in what manner the most refined graces of his poetry are united with false and exaggerated descriptions; the most correct and simple expression of the passions, with a

Con questo diffidar. Pensaci, appaga
Il mio giusto desio.
SESTO. Ma qual' astro splendeva al nascer mio!
Atto III. Sc. 6.

total want of probability in the characters; and an inexhaustible variety in the details, with a tedious sameness in the ground-work of the plots. They are peculiar compositions of their kind; and yet, in perusal, appear to bear too marked a resemblance to the tragic drama to be referable to any other rules. When we receive them, however, as such, we are unable to lend ourselves, in the least degree, to the illusion of those combats of the opera, in which very brilliant victories are achieved without any appearance of the dying or the dead; and we become weary of those side whispers, intended to instruct the inattentive spectators, insomuch that we never hear a falsehood uttered aloud, but it is sure to receive a contradiction in an under-breath. There is even a degree of tediousness felt in the mixture of the lyric and dramatic verses, which interrupts the expression of the sense, to give play to the imagination; but the moment we consider Metastasio in his true character, as the great poet of the opera, he will always excite that degree of admiration which is due to an author advancing, without a guide, in a new career, and leaving behind him none who ventured to imitate him. Fresh serious operas doubtless appear, daily, soliciting the attention of the composers; but where shall we meet with one which will bear perusal? Where shall we meet with an author who has acquired a reputation for even taste and talent, in a style of composition which has raised

Metastasio to a rank among the greatest poets? It is not dramatic skill alone which draws forth the plaudits of the public. There is a certain delicacy and enchanting softness of character, which are as sure to win its smiles, as the most finished art in exhibiting to our view the workings of human passions, and the details of human events.

We do not mean to enter upon the discussion of the lyrical productions of Metastasio. His *cantate* and *canzonette* might have been sufficient for the reputation of another author. They have the same smoothness of versification as his airs, the same truth of drawing, and the same delicious sweetness in the language. But our admiration is absorbed in the fine dramatic creations of a poet, who has exercised such a marked influence over the taste of his nation; and since we have been compelled to pass over so many of these, without touching upon their peculiar excellencies, it can hardly be expected that we should bestow more of our attention upon lighter pieces, which, with all their merit, are certainly not original in their way. We scarcely need to observe, that Metastasio is, at once, the most pleasing, and the least difficult of the Italian poets; and that no one can be wrong in commencing the study of the Italian classics, and in imbibing, at its very source, the pleasure of poetic harmony, in the great poet of the opera.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Italian Literature in the Eighteenth Century continued: Comedies—Goldoni.

THE revival of Italian literature, after more than an age of degeneracy and decline, must be allowed to be a subject worthy of our curiosity and attention. Such a regeneration, unaccompanied by any favourable combination of circumstances, and such a rapid developement of mind, amidst obstacles nearly similar to those which arrested the progress of letters in the preceding age, are surely a cause for consolation and triumph to mankind. We perceive how much vigour and perseverance are at once required effectually to repress the intellectual energies of man, and what resources for renewed action have been conferred upon him, enabling him to rise superior to the calamities which may have overwhelmed him. The political situation of Italy underwent but little improvement during the eighteenth century, and what had been gained was, perhaps, more than counterbalanced by habits of national sloth and indifference acquired by the people. A destructive war broke

out, in the beginning of the century, relating to the Spanish succession, which had, at first, the effect of transferring the provinces formerly in possession of the Spaniards to the German house of Austria. But subsequent wars, which terminated in 1748, restored a portion of the provinces, forming a part of the Imperial dominions under Charles V., to the princes of the royal family of Spain. These princes, however, were of the house of Bourbon, and the influence which they exercised in Italy, might as justly be accounted of French as of Spanish origin. During the remaining part of the century, Italy had to complain of few serious wars; and the course of her own affairs experienced neither interruption nor encouragement from the revolutions of foreign countries.

A very formidable power had arisen in the north of Italy, in the house of Savoy, which, in 1713, attained to royal dignity, and continued to aggrandize itself during the last age, under a succession of politic and warlike princes. But though distinguished for men of superior talents and character, the state of Savoy contributed little to the advancement of Italian letters. The government was wholly military, and bestowed no attention on the progress of the human mind; while the popular language spoken in Piedmont, a rude dialect composed of French and Italian, added to the indifference shewn by the Piedmontese for literary pursuits. The duchies of Milan and of

Mantua, under the power of the house of Austria, and subsequently of that of Lorraine, were, for a long period, governed by the deputies of sovereigns, who, while they indulged a taste for Italian poetry, were as cautious of encouraging the growth of intellectual freedom in Italy, as they were in Germany. The regency of Count Firmian, and the patronage afforded by Joseph II., were, nevertheless, favourable to these provinces, during the latter part of the eighteenth century. The universities of Pavia and Mantua owed their restoration to Imperial munificence; and the disputed jurisdiction of the Popes gave rise to more liberal doctrines, pronounced from the chairs, than had been heard in Italy for a considerable length of time. The Venetian Republic, striving to disguise its decay of importance and of power under the cloak of policy and of resolute neutrality, seemed only desirous of burying itself in oblivion. While it encouraged the sciences in the university of Padua, philosophy was carefully excluded. Amusements were, also, liberally encouraged among the people, for the purpose of diverting their attention from more serious affairs, and the splendour of its theatres seemed to infuse fresh energy into the drama of Italy; while the Dukes of Parma, and many other potentates, endeavoured, by rewards and encouragement, to produce pieces of equal excellence, and to vie with the Venetians, though in vain. The duchy

of Modena, still in possession of the house of Este, with that of Parma, revived in favour of a younger branch of the Bourbons, had both been almost extinguished in the wars of the early part of the century. They were not again restored until after the lapse of a considerable time and with great difficulty; nor did they in any way contribute to the advancement of letters, except by small pensions bestowed upon poets of the court. The grand-duchy of Tuscany had been subjected to a variety of changes, at different periods. During some years, at the beginning of the century, Cosmo III. still continued to reign. A jealous and suspicious bigot, he held the intellect, as well as the conscience of his subjects, in the harshest state of vassalage. The monks were his counsellors, and the whole of that beautiful country wore the aspect of one of their gloomiest convents. His son, Giovanni Gastone, on the contrary, sought to bury the sense of his own infirmities, and of the approaching extinction of his family, in a sort of perpetual carnival, and dissipation of mind. When, in the year 1737, Tuscany was transferred to Francis I. of Lorraine, who had married Maria Theresa, he appeared inclined to abandon it to its fate, refusing to reside there, on the plea of devoting his attention to the more important concerns of the empire. But his son Leopold, when he assumed the sovereignty, began with great zeal and activity to apply the doctrines

of philosophy to the affairs of state. He invited the attention of his subjects to political studies, and himself led them in the path they should pursue. He restored to the people of Tuscany the power of thinking, of speaking, and of writing, to an extent, which, though not unlimited, had no resemblance to the servile repose to which Italy had been accustomed for upwards of two hundred years. A pretty correct edition of the Italian poets and classics was published, by his particular direction, at Leghorn, under the fictitious date of London, which consisted almost entirely of prohibited books. The papal dominions were also in the possession, during this age, of two sovereign pontiffs, who appeared to emulate the example of Popes Nicholas and Pius of the fifteenth century, by the encouragement they afforded to letters and to the sciences. These men were Clement XIV. and Benedict XIV., whose personal influence, however, was rendered much less effectual by the opposition of the government of the priests. In fact, the territories of the Church, during the whole of this age, might be compared to one immense desert, where no signs of cultivation or of life appeared. The university of Bologna, alone, seemed to be exempted from the universal apathy which reigned around. Letters appeared to share with commerce the protection afforded by a municipal government, which preserved some resemblance of its ancient

liberty. And, finally, the house of Bourbon, which had borne sway in Naples since the year 1735, attempted to mark the revival of that ancient monarchy, by advancing the progress of science and of letters. Charles IV. of Naples, and III. of Spain, gave the first impulse to these pursuits, of which the nation availed itself, during the long and lethargic reign of his successor.

We may gather, even from this brief sketch of the times, that the disposition displayed by the different potentates of Italy towards the cause of letters was of a much more encouraging nature, during the eighteenth century, than during the preceding age. Yet we may observe that none of these princes had received a very favourable education, nor possessed a character capable of undertaking noble things. A few of them are, doubtless, entitled to the praise of good intentions, but none have any claim to a lasting reputation, nor to a high place in the historical records of the times. A contracted spirit prevailed throughout their counsels and administration, even more than in their own minds. An established practice of exact controul, of obstinate dislike to every thing new, and of jealous inquietude and mistrust, ran through all the inferior departments of the government, habituating its subjects to a state of passive obedience and restraint. The corruption of manners was the result rather of the dictates of fashion than of any excess of the passions: a ge-

neral frivolity occupied the place of all serious reflection, and all warmth of conversation; while long habits of indolence, farther enfeebling the mind, seemed to incapacitate it for every kind of occupation. The fashionable custom of attendant *Cicisbei*, as little favourable to intellect as to manners, engaged the chief portion of the time of those whose object it was to trifle the whole of it away, and devolved hourly duties upon beings who might boast of having no other aim in life. They possessed no new ideas, no resources, either in the conduct of life, in action, or in speech; and the hopelessness of applying study to any laudable purpose led to an extreme remissness in the education of youth. The universities, which formerly bore so high a reputation, were frequented only by the students of theology, of medicine, and of jurisprudence, with a view to a lucrative profession; and the hours devoted to more liberal studies than those of the priest, the physician, and the advocate, were generally considered as lost. The numerous private academies, which had produced so many distinguished characters, during the fifteenth century, were now closed; and only a few monkish seminaries remained, where the chief object of education was not so much to teach as to restrict, and to inculcate the duty of submitting the reason and the will to the established law of silence and dissimulation, of obedience and fear. In short, the whole nation might be

considered as virtually extinct; or if any vestiges of its former great qualities were to be discovered, they were found in those obscure stations where the influence of education and of society had not penetrated, among the peasants and the lowest classes of the people, who, it may be observed, uniformly retain the same power of imagination, and the same quickness of feeling, as during the happiest periods of their annals.

They who had sufficient energy to emerge out of this state of general apathy and degradation, were first induced to make the effort from very laudable views. They took a national pride in demonstrating to the world that the literature of no people could boast, in any of its branches, of a superiority over the Italian. Their information was derived from foreign sources, and chiefly from the French. They began to compare themselves with others, before they had learned properly to appreciate themselves. Imagining that they discovered in the works of the French critics too severe and partial a judgment of Italian literature, they attempted to prove its fallacy by their works. They had been accused of want of comprehension, or want of observation, of the rules of Aristotle; and they immediately made them the main article of their literary creed. We recognize this emulative spirit in the eagerness evinced by the Italians to display the excellencies of their writers in every branch of knowledge;

and, indeed, in all the productions belonging to this century, they sought to convey an impression that in nothing had they been surpassed. Such motives, too evidently apparent, deduct largely from the sincerity and originality of the works of the eighteenth century.

One of the first attempts to supply their deficiency, for which the Italians had been reproached, in dramatic poetry, proceeded from a very tame imitator of French models, who could boast nothing of the genius they displayed. Pietro Jacopo Martelli was professor of literature at Bologna, where he died in the year 1727. He took Corneille for his prototype in the tragic, and Moliere, in the comic line; and, with talents something below mediocrity, he succeeded in preserving only the outline of their pieces, the combination of their scenes, and their theatrical regulations; but the spirit and the power of their drama were beyond his reach. The undertaking, however, proved so far successful, in point of language, that it conferred upon the Italian a new species of verse, entitled, from its author, *Martelliano*, which is still occasionally employed. To give his pieces a more complete resemblance to the French, Martelli wished to adapt the Alexandrine to Italian poetry; and with this view he made an alteration in it, which, though indispensable in point of language, rendered it intolerable to the ear. He added a mute syllable to the cesura of the hemi-

stich; giving to the *stanza Martelliana*, a sort of movement, at the same time discordant, vulgar, and abrupt. All writers of Italian comedy, since that period, have adopted the same metre, whenever they wished to compose in verse.

Faggiuoli, a Florentine, who died in 1742, is another of those authors who attempted to introduce a new style of comedy on the model of the French. The chief merit of his dramas, consisting of seven volumes, will be found in their correct delineation of manners, in their popular humour, and in the ease and purity of their language. But the fire and force of dramatic genius are wanting. Even the finest passages possess only a negative kind of beauty; and Faggiuoli, like Martelli, failed to fill up the void in the annals of the Italian drama.

The Marchese Scipione Maffei was the third to enter the lists on this occasion. He could, at least, boast the possession of real talent and feeling, both of which he displayed in his *Merope*, deserving the extended reputation it acquired. Maffei was born at Verona, in 1675; and like most of the literary characters of Italy, produced verses at a very early age. His genius embraced a wide field of human knowledge, being equally conversant with history, antiquity and natural philosophy. He undertook a poem, in an hundred cantos, upon the harmony of human virtues. Consulting the interests of the theatre, he made a selection of the best tragedies and comedies written in the six-

teenth century, which the theatrical managers had suffered to sink into oblivion. Jealous of the fame of the French drama, he produced a critique on the *Rodogune* of Corneille, embracing general strictures upon the taste of the French theatre. In a word, he resolved, at the age of thirty-nine, to present the world with a model of true tragedy, such as he conceived it should be; and availed himself both of the Greek and the French dramatists, without tamely following in their path. His tragedy, brought forward, at Modena, in the spring of 1713, enjoyed a run of success altogether unexampled in the annals of the Italian theatre. It arrived at the sixtieth edition, and the autograph manuscript of the author is preserved as one of the sacred reliques of Italy.

As the *Merope* of Euripides is lost to the moderns, Maffei may be considered as the first author, possessed of genius, who availed himself of this very dramatic and affecting story, which has since been treated by Voltaire and by Alfieri. Maffei piqued himself on the possibility of convincing the moderns, that a tragedy might be written without a syllable of love, and without adopting the romantic taste which prevailed in the drama of France. He succeeded, in fact, in exciting, and in maintaining, a very lively interest, by the danger to which a mother exposes her only son, under the idea that she is about to avenge him. A few of the scenes are peculiarly affecting, by the

contrast offered between the fury of Merope and the resignation of Ægisthus, who is supposed to feel a presentiment of her being his mother. But the idea of Merope burning to execute vengeance, with her own hands, upon a prisoner lying bound before her, instead of awakening our sympathy, makes us recoil with disgust.* The

* The opening of this scene will serve to give an idea both of the beauties and the defects of the *Merope* of Maffei.

EURISO. Eccomi a cenni tuoi.
MEROPE. Tosto di lui
T' assicura.
EUR. Son pronto, or più non fugge,
Se questo braccio non ci lascia.
EGISTO. Come!
E perchè mai fuggir dovrei? Regina,
Non basta dunque un sol tuo cenno? imponi:
Spiegami il tuo voler; che far poss' io?
Vuoi ch' immobil mi renda? immobil sono.
Ch' io pieghi le ginocchia? ecco le piego.
Ch' io t' offra inerme il petto? eccoti il petto.
ISM. (Chi crederia che sotto un tanto umile
Sembiante tanta iniquità s'asconda?)
MER. Spiega la fascia, e ad un di questi marmi
L' annoda in guisa che fuggir non possa.
EGISTO. O ciel, che stravaganza!
EUR. Or quà, spediamci,
E per tuo ben non far nè pur sembiante
Di repugnare o di far forza.
EGISTO. E credi
Tu che quì fermo tuo valor mi tenga?
E ch' uom tu fossi da atterrirmi, e trarmi

anxiety of the spectator is well supported, and even becomes more poignant from scene to scene, although it must be allowed to be rather that of an intrigue, than of strict tragedy. Too many adventures, also, are inwoven, and somewhat too unaccountably; while the incidents come

In questo modo? Non se trè tuoi pari
Stessermi intorno; gli orsi alla foresta
Non ho temuto d' affrontare io solo.

EUR. Ciancia a tuo senno, pur ch' io quì ti leghi.

EGISTO. Mira, colei mi lega: ella mi toglie
Il mio vigor: il suo real volere
Venero e temo: fuor di cio, gia cinto
T' avrei con queste braccia, e sollevato
T' avrei percosso al suol.

MER. Non tacerai,
Temerario? affrettar cerchi il tuo fato?

EGISTO. Regina, io cedo, io t' ubbidisco, io stesso
Qual ti piace, m' adatto. Ha pochi istanti
Ch' io fui per te tratto dai ceppi, ed ecco
Ch' io ti rendo il tuo don: vieni tu stessa;
Stringimi a tuo piacer: tu discioglieşti
Queste misere membra, e tu le annoda.

MER. Or va, recami un asta.

EGISTO. Un asta! o sorte
Qual di me gioco oggi ti prendi? e quale
Commesso ho mai nuovo delitto? Dimmi:
A qual fine son io quì avvinto e stretto?

MER. China quegli occhi, traditore, a terra.

ISM. Eccoti il ferro.

EUR. Io il prendo, e se t' è in grado,
Gliel presento alla gola.

MER. A me quel ferro.

Atto III. Sc. 4.

upon us, as if it were by mere chance. The whole is composed in *versi sciolti*, or blank verse, which are equally elevated, simple, and harmonious. Maffei, ridiculing the measured stateliness of French verse, wished to present us with a more natural and easy style, and, perhaps, occasionally ran into the opposite extreme of a trivial and prosaic turn of expression. This degree of simplicity, however, sometimes gave him the command of language of a more true and touching description; as when Euryses, Merope's confidant, attempts to console her, on hearing of the death of her son, by bringing to mind examples of fortitude under similar calamities:

EUR. Think how the mighty king, for whom all Greece
In arms arose 'gainst Troy, in Aulis gave
His dear child to a fierce and cruel death,
As the gods will'd it.
MER. But, O Euryses, the great gods had never
Required it of a mother.*

This sentiment, however, is not Maffei's; he was indebted for it to a mother suffering under real affliction.

---

* EUR. Tu ben sai che il gran rè, per cui fu tratta
La Grecia in armi a Troia, in Auli ei stesso
La cara figlia a cruda morte offerse,
E sai che il comandar gli stessi Dei.
MER. O Euriso, non avrian già mai gli Dei
Cio comandato ad una madre.

Atto II. Sc. 6.

There is, moreover, a very graceful turn of language and a natural expression of the feelings, though rather of a pastoral than of a tragic nature, in the speech of Polydore, where he first discovers the son of his friend in the palace of Merope, and recalls his numerous virtues to mind. The following translation of this passage, in blank verse, by Voltaire, is found in his Letter to Maffei.

Eurises, c'est donc vous ?
Vous, cet aimable enfant que si souvent Sylvie
Se faisait un plaisir de conduire à la cour ?
Je crois que c'est hier. O ! que vous êtes prompte !
Que vous croissez, jeunesse ! et que dans vos beaux jours
Vous nous avertissez de vous céder la place.*

From the number of similar attempts made by Voltaire, we might suppose he was desirous of introducing this species of verse into French poetry; although he did not wish to incur himself the responsibility attaching to it. But he should have avoided, somewhat more carefully, prosaic turns of expression, in lines possessing no longer the attraction of rhyme. The Italian language, on the other hand, is distinguished

* Tu dunque sei quel fanciullin che in corte
Silvia condur solea quasi per pompa:
Parmi l' altr' ieri. Oh quanto siete presti,
Quanto mai v' affrettate, o giovinetti,
A farvi adulti, ed a gridar tacendo
Che noi diam loco!

Atto IV. Sc. 4.

by much greater elevation of style, when written in blank verse, than in rhyme.

Maffei, likewise, applied his talents to comedy; but of two pieces, which he composed in this line, neither appeared to meet with much success. He died in the year 1755, at the advanced age of eighty years. The example which he gave to the dramatists of the day, in his tragedy of *Merope*, seemed to rouse them to fresh exertions, and a host of writers took him for their model in a series of tragedies, which appeared during the early part of the century. None of these deserved a lasting reputation; and the collections which have been made of them, will hardly reward us for the trouble of perusal.

The Abbate Pietro Chiari, poet to the court of the Duke of Modena, in the hope of producing a new era in the dramatic annals of Italy, composed no less than ten volumes of comedies in verse. These enjoyed a partial success; being received much in the same manner as his romances had before been by the ladies of Italy: a proof to what an extent the corruption of good taste and of the drama must have proceeded. They are characterized by a solemn emptiness and by a common-place affectation, which render them equally tedious and ridiculous.

Carlo Goldoni, at length, made his appearance; and the revolution so frequently attempted in the taste of the Italian theatre, by men whose talents

were unequal to the task, was reserved for one, whose genius was capable of making a stronger impression on the minds of his countrymen. Goldoni was a native of Venice, born in 1707, and he died, in Paris, in 1792. He was at first intended for an advocate, but the pleasure he derived from a short tour made with a company of comedians, led him to renounce his profession, and to attach himself wholly to the theatre, where he commenced his original career in 1746. The first piece represented by the company to which he belonged, was his *Donna di Garbo: The Lady of Merit*, which was received with very general applause. From that period, he poured forth his pieces with astonishing facility, and traces of his rapidity may be clearly perceived in the compositions themselves; of which, we are assured, he wrote no less than one hundred and fifty. He speedily overthrew the reputation acquired by the Abbate Chiari, whose tame and pedantic productions could not bear a moment's competition with those of Goldoni. He afterwards encountered more powerful opposition from the pen of Count Carlo Gozzi, who accused him of having deprived the Italian theatre of the charm of poetry and imagination. Gozzi had obtained a very popular, although a short-lived name, in 1761, by working fairy tales into dramas; and Goldoni had to struggle against him for a considerable time. He at last became irritated; and in the same year, in a moment of in-

dignation, set out for Paris, where he produced, in the French language, *Le Bourru bienfaisant: The morose Philanthropist*, represented for the first time in the year 1771. He was offered a situation at court, and notwithstanding the renewed success which his works met with in Italy, he could not be induced to visit it again. He became blind in the decline of life, and died in 1792.

In the outset of his career, Goldoni found the Italian theatre divided between two different classes of dramatic composition. These were the classical comedies, and the comedies of art. The first class comprehended such as were more particularly the production of the closet; the fruits of anxious study and correct observance of the Aristotelian rules; but possessing none of the popular qualities sought for by the public. Of these, some were pedantic copies of the ancients; others, imitations of these copies; and others again, were borrowed from the French. We have already bestowed sufficient notice upon these, and have pointed out to what degree they are deficient in the qualities of originality, strength, and wit. The comedies of art were the production of the comedians themselves, and were chiefly extemporary, or sketched with a very slight outline, intended for the actor at his pleasure to fill up. Such was the species of composition which brought upon the Italian theatre the

reproach of endeavouring to interest the public only by its popular pleasantries, by gross buffooneries, and by adventures equally improbable and absurd. Foreigners invariably treated them with extreme contempt; while the Italians themselves, ashamed to hear them mentioned, and conscious that the public was pleased with no other kind of exhibition, had nothing to offer in their own excuse. In fact, the people resorted in crowds to witness the comedy of art, while the classical theatre was left to the actors and to empty benches. Yet, neither were the people in the wrong; nor were the accusations attaching to the comedies of art unjust. The truth is, they were the only productions agreeable to the national spirit of the people, and which gave a just view of the force and vivacity of the Italian character.

Theatrical managers, who gave a new comedy every evening, were naturally desirous, for economical reasons, of making use of the dresses of the night for the personages who were to appear on the ensuing day; and hence, doubtless, the origin of the comic Italian masks. A sort of abstract consideration of the different characters supposed to be requisite to give a natural and complete view of familiar life, was entered into by these comic speculators; and two fathers, two lovers, two ladies, and three or four domestics, were generally fixed upon. An appropriate situation, a

name, a country, a mask, and a dress, were bestowed on each of these; and each actor was entitled to one of these personages by right of long prescription, and strove to make himself master of his character, his tone of voice, and his repartees. Dramatic tradition, also, came in aid of this first distribution of the parts: a particular motion of the head, tone of voice, or gesture, adopted by some uncommon performer in the character of Pantaloon, of Doctor Balanzoni, of Harlequin, or of Columbine, became the peculiar attributes of such fantastic beings. Every thing was "set down and conned by rote;" the character, the ideas, and the minutest tricks; insomuch that the actor had no scope allowed him for invention; his business was to fill correctly the part which had been assigned to him. Each individual personage, as it has been very happily observed by A. W. Schlegel, in his *Dramatic Course*, resembled one of the pieces at a game of chess, whose progress is ready chalked out, and invariably subject to the same rules: a knight is never permitted to move like a bishop or a rook. Yet, with pieces of a limited number, and of invariable power, the combinations of the game are infinite; and the same remark may very properly be applied to the characters of the Italian theatre.

But in proportion as less was left to the discretion of the actor to do, in the invention of this imaginary

personage, the more safely might he be entrusted with every thing incumbent upon him to say. An actor, who had never appeared on the boards except in the character of Pantaloon, or one who had, all his life, done nothing but play the part of Harlequin, was much less likely to commit any improprieties of character, than even the author who had produced the piece. Of this, the latter was so sensible, that he was in general content to write a mere sketch. He brought upon the scene two or three of these personages, pointed out the manner in which their colloquies were to end, and took his leave of them, in the confidence that they would put the finish to their natural humour in their own way. These outlines of performances, were in repute during the whole of the seventeenth and the greatest part of the eighteenth century, when they were, also, introduced into France by the actors of Italy. They had, moreover, no little influence in fixing the taste for the species of humour most appropriate and admissible for the Italian stage. This humour could seldom be derived from the subject of the piece; and it was, on the contrary, necessary to elicit it almost entirely from the characters. The comic situations and incidents were all arranged beforehand; because a word too little or too much, would be quite sufficient to change the whole aspect of affairs; to release an unlucky wretch from

his difficulties; to discover the secret of the piece, or to explain a mutual misapprehension. Besides, a really good pleasantry, which ought to be equally ingenious, just, and pertinent, is by no means such a vulgar article as always to come to hand at the moment it is wanted; and it is very well if it can be elaborated before. A good actor had, nevertheless, sufficient scope allowed him to display a humorous imagination, without encroaching upon the province of another, or bringing into jeopardy the interest of the piece. Pantaloon was at liberty to make a display of good-natured folly; the Doctor had an old prescription for his pedantic vanity; Columbine for her roguery, and Harlequin for his foolery. Gaiety was expected from the drolleries; but it had no malice in it; inasmuch as each held up his own faults and his own happy absurdities to view, instead of ridiculing the foibles of his neighbour; but the satire was thus very frequently as little pointed as it was true. It failed in point, because the performers neither observed nor knew before hand, the persons whom they might have to deal with upon the scene; and it wanted nature, inasmuch as each actor caricatured the part which he had to play, for the sake of producing greater effect.

But Goldoni, while he engaged the actors to deliver his pieces exactly as he had written them, with a prohibition against introducing dialogues

at their pleasure, contrived to approach nearer to the comedies of art, than any author who had until then appeared. He retained in, at least, one half of his plays all the masks of Italian comedy; leaving them in undisputed possession of the character which tradition had assigned to them: and when the performers were freed from the immediate restraint of the author's presence, they again began to exhibit their extemporary talents; so that, as the writers who succeeded to Goldoni renounced the masks altogether, it is only in the pieces of the latter that we are still treated, in Italy, with the appearance of an actor playing his own part as an *improvvisatore*.

Goldoni is considered, by the Italians, as the author who carried the dramatic art, in Italy, to its highest point of perfection; and he must, certainly, be allowed to have possessed no common powers. He had a fertility of invention, which supplied him with subjects for his comic muse, almost always new; and such facility of composition, that he not unfrequently produced a comedy of five acts, in verse, within as many days: a rapidity so far prejudicial, as it led him to bestow too little pains upon the correctness of his comedies. His dialogue was extremely animated, earnest, and full of meaning; and with a very exact knowledge of the national manners, he possessed the rare faculty of giving a lively representation of them on the stage. To these

he added an exquisite relish of Italian humour, which delights in amusing pictures of absurdity, and in the genius of the buffoon.

It is not to be denied, however, that Goldoni's works are not so highly estimated by foreigners as by the people of Italy; and this is chiefly to be attributed to the want of those romantic and poetic elements in the national manners, which renders them less suitable for dramatic display. The passion of love must still form the animating principle of our comedy, as well as of our romance; being, at once, the most lively and poetical of all the social passions, and that which gives the greatest developement to character, and the strongest colours to our future days. But lasting and impassioned love, taking its source at once in the heart, the understanding, and the senses, and combining their qualities in one; a love which founds its pleasure upon mutual preference, cannot easily be supposed, in Italian manners, to aim at marriage as its ultimate object. Educated in complete seclusion from society, and obliged to maintain the utmost reserve, their young women are subjected to as severe an ordeal of public opinion for merely appearing in the world, as for engaging in a dishonourable intrigue. They are thus, in some instances, induced to yield the rein to their feelings, not only in a very inconsiderate manner, but with an impetuosity and

imprudence equally surprising and revolting; and they often learn to think less of indulging a choice of affection than of obtaining, in a general way, an establishment in marriage. This they look forward to as the means of at once throwing off the restraints imposed upon them by their parents and by society, and the affectation of a reserve, as little agreeable to their inclinations as to their taste; and as the moment for enjoying the pleasures afforded them in the world. In Italy, it is made a point of duty, in a discreet and sensible girl, to accept the husband provided for her by her parents, whatever may be her objections to his character, his understanding, or his person; and it is this singular sort of moral, always inculcated by the comic poet, which exhibits such an amusing contrast to our own preconceived opinions on the subject. Thus, in *The Twins of Venice*, a subject treated at least twenty times by the dramatists of every nation, since the time of Plautus, and the humour of which depends upon the mistakes arising out of the perfect resemblance between two brothers, we behold one of them just arrived from the mountains of Bergamo, to espouse Rosetta, the daughter of Doctor Balanzoni. Now, Rosetta is a virtuous and prudent girl, whom the author delights to hold up as a model of duty to the young ladies of Italy. Her lover is an idle, ignorant, cowardly, uneducated fool; a sort of harlequin, intended to support the

absurdity of the piece to its close. Rosetta is at some pains to repel his impertinence, and to keep him at a distance, although, at the same time, she frequently gives us to understand that he is far from being very disagreeable. The author rids himself of this notable hero by poisoning him upon the stage, and further justifies this summary way of proceeding, in his preface, by the ingenious argument, that, far from exciting any tragic feelings, he only amuses us by the ridiculous manner in which he meets with his death. But I doubt whether the spectators do not view the affair in another light, and feel that the levity of a buffoon, attending the commission of an atrocious crime, adds considerably to its horror. However this may be, Rosetta, after expressing a proper sense of her despair, in the next scene accepts the hand of Lelio, another species of the tribe of fools, whose boasting falsehoods and absurdities had sustained the first four acts. Until the fifth, he had been devoted to another lady; but he has then the option of Rosetta's hand, with a fortune of fifteen thousand crowns; and exclaims, in the presence of the lady, "She cannot but be agreeable; fifteen thousand crowns confer beauty upon every one." The lady's consent is then asked; and Rosetta replies, "That she has always pleasure in fulfilling the wishes of her father." This utter want of delicacy is, we must confess, too frequently met with in the man-

ners of the people; but we can hardly persuade ourselves that such manners are adapted to the stage.

The female characters of most of this author's pieces discover little more delicacy in their sentiments and conduct. Thus, in his *Donna di testa debole:* or *The weak-headed Lady,* D. Elvira makes improper advances, and induces her friend to take similar steps, in her name, to D. Fausto, a lover of her sister-in-law, not out of any affection she entertains for him, but out of mere jealousy lest her sister-in-law should be married before herself.* She, likewise, gives a very sharp lecture to her uncle Pantaloon, the master of the house, for not shewing more alertness in providing her with a separate establishment, in marriage.† As the name indicates the genus of the character, all the Rosettas of his pieces are found to be sentimental young ladies, a little amorous, and very obedient; with a vast ambition of being married, but with still higher notions of paternal authority. Goldoni's Beatrices, on the contrary, are of the opposite character, full of vivacity, impetuosity, and frolic, as a contrast to his melancholy Rosettas. Sometimes their extreme violence carries them beyond all kind of conventional bounds. We are presented, in many of Goldoni's

* La Donna di testa debole. *Atto II. Sc.* 10.

† The same. *Atto I. Sc.* 14.

plays, with young ladies just eloped from home, pursuing their admirers in a student's gown, or a military roquelaure, proceeding from place to place, and after all concluding their adventures happily. Such personages have a very strong infusion of the national character; no country in the world affording so many instances of the triumph of passion, when once the fair martyrs have overcome all obstacles, in order to yield themselves up to its dictates; but the results attributed by the romance are by no means probable. There is no truth in them; and it is prejudicial, in a moral point of view, to give honourable results to a vicious and dissipated course of life, such as that of Beatrice in *The Twins of Venice*, or in *Harlequin the Valet of two Masters;* and to suppose that female virtue incurs no risk by an elopement from the paternal mansion. It may, to be sure, be observed, that regard to dramatic propriety, not always favourable to morals, would not admit of a less fortunate conclusion to the story. In truth, the scenic heroines, by pretty general agreement, are supposed, on the whole, to entertain only virtuous sentiments; and this rule, which I am far from presuming to impugn, gives a singular air of incongruity to the representation of manners, which are by no means so immaculate. The chief developement of the passions, the absorbing interest of life, in Italy, appear to be centered in that whimsical relation

known by the name of *Cicisbei*, or *Cavalieri serventi*. The restraint there imposed upon young unmarried women, and the unbounded liberty granted to those who wear the hymeneal yoke, invariably led, according to the customs of the country, to the reign of love, subsequent to that of marriage. Love was then no longer confounded with the vague desire of a settlement in life, but sprung from intimate acquaintance, coincidence of feelings, and an union of the whole soul. This, however, had a very unfavourable influence on all the relations of social life; on the peace of families, the education of children, and the character of woman. None of the comic authors ventured to exhibit a sentiment of so immoral a tendency upon the stage, although they could not wholly exclude one of the most characteristic traits from the pictures of national manners thus exhibited. *Cicisbei* are introduced into the greatest part of the comedies, without, however, being permitted to breathe a syllable of love. We are almost at a loss to perceive the object of their hopes or fears; their situation renders them peculiarly dull and unimpassioned; it never changes; and in this very disinterested sentiment, leading to no action, and permitted to give no expression to its wishes, we anticipate as little of the intrigue as of the catastrophe.

Nor is it the tender passion only which is thus misrepresented in the character of Goldoni's

women. We find others equally inconsistent, both in point of natural and dramatic propriety. I have invariably found the exhibition of feminine friendship received with the most lively applause on the Italian stage. The ladies, in Goldoni, always meet each other with the most rapturous expressions of affection, bestowing mutual flattery upon their graces of mind and person, with the warmest assurances that they take infinite pleasure in participating each other's feelings; yet the moment they are separated, they attack each other's character in a strain of mingled hatred and contempt. Unfortunately, this species of hypocrisy among fair acquaintance is of no very rare occurrence in Italy. It is, perhaps, more usual there than in other places; but it required no great degree of skill, on the part of the author, to bring this contrast of manners into view. There can be no merit in describing a scene which calls for no particular delicacy, judgment, or accuracy. And even supposing such hypocrisy to be natural, it is equally low and revolting when it occurs so frequently throughout the author's pieces; and, by renouncing the interest arising out of real friendship, he, at the same time, deprives himself of one grand source of touching the feelings, and of weaving and unravelling his plot.

In the same manner, the good and the bad qualities of his women are all carried to an ex-

treme; there are no redeeming points in some, and no foibles in others. In one of his comedies, Goldoni aimed at throwing ridicule upon the tastes of learned ladies, in which he far surpassed the degree of extravagance and caricature for which Moliere has been reproached; whose portraits may be considered as patterns of delicacy when placed by the side of the Italian. The subject of this satirical piece, *La Donna di testa debole*, brings forward very powerful arguments, with much acuteness and good sense, for the cultivation of her mind. But this she conceives chiefly to depend upon the number of lessons she takes in the Latin syntax, from an ignorant student, who instructs her to speak in a pedantic jargon, which cannot fail to render her ridiculous as well as her master, neither of them being able to utter a sentence without a solecism, or to understand the Latin decree pronounced by the judge in her lawsuit. In Italy, however, the nature of pedantry is not understood. A person is never exposed to ridicule for making a parade of the knowledge he really possesses, but for piquing himself on that which he does not, in the least, understand. Upon this distinction, Goldoni founded his *Donna di Garbo: The Lady of Merit*, as a contrast to the *Donna di testa debole: The weak-headed Lady;* the former of whom is a most intolerable pedant; yet because she surpasses every one opposed to her in real scientific knowledge, she is fixed upon as the

source of the interest of the piece, and as a pattern for all studious ladies. Holding a menial situation in the house of Dr. Balanzoni, she engages the affections of the doctor, who is induced to marry her. Sometimes she reads her own poetry; sometimes she argues a Latin thesis, and at others, engages in scholastic disputes; displaying, throughout the whole performance, the sort of information least agreeable in women. In another Italian comedy, *Di Napoli Signorelli*, we are presented with a lady, in a man's dress, playing the part of an advocate; and the specimen of her pleading, sprinkled with texts of Roman law, is inserted at length in the drama.

Defects of the same kind are apparent, also, in the characters of the men. In Italy no considerations on moral philosophy, which are always suspected of endangering the interests of religion, are allowed to appear. Sound morality is, in consequence, so falsely appreciated and understood, that what a comic author not unfrequently exhibits as noble, delicate, and virtuous, is precisely of an opposite nature; and the same remark will even apply to more serious writers. Dissimulation and breach of faith are vices of which the Italian people are in general accused. This fact may, perhaps, have given rise to that frequent inculcation of a religious observance of the word, which we so frequently find placed among the virtues of the Italian stage. But they extend

this duty to cases where it will not apply, depending entirely upon the will of others; and they treat the heart and hand of a daughter as if it were always in a father's power to confer them. We have an instance of this in *The Obedient Daughter;* a piece, in other respects, deficient neither in interest nor wit, where Pantaloon encourages his daughter's regard for Florindo, who had set out for Leghorn to obtain the consent of his parents to their nuptials. He returns successful; but a few hours after his arrival, Count Ottavio, a rich blockhead, makes his appearance, requesting Rosetta's hand from her father, who is not disposed to lose so favourable an opportunity of a rich alliance. He, therefore, gives his daughter's consent, without consulting her on the subject; and his word, on such an occasion, is considered as irrevocable. Florindo, in despair, pleads his prior title in vain; and in vain Rosetta, while she obeys, discovers the wretchedness of her heart. The new lover, of whom no one in the family knew any thing, likewise displays the most childish extravagance in the presence both of father and daughter, all in vain. He is a bad character, a spendthrift, and a coward; but Pantaloon, though neither an obstinate, nor avaricious father, but a kind and sensible parent, with a high sense of his duties, has given his word and will observe it. He deeply sympathizes

in his daughter's affliction, but is not the less resolved to sacrifice her to his promise. Rosetta submits to every thing, with the greatest resignation; she consents to give her hand to the Count that very day, and even tells her father that, for his sake, she does it with pleasure! The only reason of the marriage not taking place proceeds from the count, who, as a fresh instance of impertinence, breaks his promise with the lady.

Even integrity is represented under very false colours, and without the least pretension to delicacy of mind. Really honest people make such repeated protestations that they will respect the property of others, as might, in other places, give rise to strong suspicions against them. In *The Twins of Venice*, Tonino, intended by the author for an accomplished gentleman obtains, through the mistake of Harlequin, jewels to a very large amount, with a purse of gold belonging to his brother. He repeatedly acquaints us that "Such an incident might have made another's fortune; but as for me, I am an honourable character, and scorn to meddle with other people's property. I shall take care of this case of jewels, and of this purse, and when I am lucky enough to meet with their right owner, I shall not fail punctually to restore them." He, nevertheless, in the next scene, offers the jewels to a woman whom he has reason to believe to be an impostor; and he

finally entrusts them, under the express condition of restoring them to the proprietor, to a stranger, who turns out to be a rogue. Learned characters are invariably represented as intolerable pedants; not for the purpose of casting ridicule upon them; but because little knowledge exists in Italy; because those who possess it seldom appear in society, and know as little of what is due to the self-love of others, as they do of the ridicule attached to their own vanity. Courage is turned into a sort of bravado, which fails upon being put to the proof. Duels are frequently exhibited on the stage, while the heroes as frequently pause to reflect, whether it might not be the safest way to assassinate their adversary.

In describing the extremes of absurdity and of vice, Goldoni threw great animation into the portraits he drew. There is, in general, a consistency in the character of each of his personages, which he preserves throughout, and which appears in every action, word, and gesture. Such a character, however, has, for the most part, little resemblance in nature, or in truth. As there is no real society in Italy, no power of opinion, and no satire which is dreaded, we there behold errors and vices exhibited with a fearless sincerity, which we in vain look for in any other country. There are certain limits, however, beyond which the comic writer must

not venture to pass, if he would avoid exciting feelings less allied to pleasure than to disgust. Cowardice is, perhaps, the quality best adapted to rouse an audience to laughter; but Goldoni, instead of confining it to persons altogether of a ridiculous stamp, conferred it, in many instances, upon his lovers, whom he thus rendered at least as effeminate as the objects of their adoration. Extreme perfidy and depravity of mind ought, by no means, to be admitted on the stage; nor, indeed, any character which is likely to be assailed by the hisses of the audience. Pancrace, in the *Twins*, is one of these; he is at once a hypocrite, a coward, and a brute, who finishes his career by poisoning his rival with so little prospect of advantage to himself, that the improbability of the circumstance adds to the feeling of disgust which his crime inspires.

This feeling of delicacy in the spectators is, in France, carried so far as not to admit of the appearance of female adventurers upon the stage. But the Italians are not so fastidious; and it is, perhaps, chiefly in the parts assigned to female dancers and actresses; in the pride which their father is supposed to take in their riches and success; and in the incessant mixture of vain-boasting and of meanness, that Goldoni discovers talents at once natural and humorous. In the pleasing comedy entitled *La Locandiera; The Landlady*, in which the animation of the dialogue,

and the whimsical contradiction of the characters, are carried very far, the only females who make their appearance are three intriguers. The author here attempts to centre the interest in Mirandolina, the mistress of the inn, who supports the character of an experienced coquette, full of life, variety, and compliment; totally insensible to the tender passion with which she dallies for mere pastime, but quite virtuous at heart; and with a reputation which, in conclusion, procures her a very suitable establishment in married life. And, in order to exhibit her excellent points in a more pleasing light, the author does not scruple to contrast her with two very impertinent, assuming, and grasping adventurers, who would not be tolerated, for a moment, on the French stage.

In the *Jealous Miser*, Pantaloon appears as an old usurer, who has just taken to himself a young wife, and who watches her like his money; though still rather with the mistrust of avarice than of love. The character is happily conceived, and developed with much spirit; but the very extravagance of his two foibles diminishes the probability of each, and renders the effect too disagreeable. The jealous miser makes himself so thoroughly contemptible, that his reformation, at the end of the play, is hardly to be accounted for by a miracle.

Among the most happy subjects for the display

of the national absurdities is, doubtless, that of ostentation. In a country, where the censure of opinion falls very lightly on those who have no solid claims to esteem, riches form the readiest means of making an impression on the public. Goldoni caught the true spirit of a foible, which gives an air of happy ridicule to many of his comedies. Three of these are devoted to the subject of *Le Villegiature;* the season passed in the country during the rural festivals; and the author has succeeded in drawing a very ludicrous picture of the sumptuous display, peculiar to one month in the year, for which whole families are content to sacrifice the comforts and enjoyments of the eleven remaining months. Such exhibitions, however, of vices and absurdities have seldom much effect in eradicating them. I have been witness to a family lavishing its resources on a magnificent festival, given on the banks of the Brenta, in which they represented the piece, well entitled: *Le Smanie per la Villegiatura: The rage for the Fêtes champêtres.* All the performers mutually ridiculed each other. The legal processes which had been served at their villa in the morning, left very little room, indeed, for illusion; but so far did they disregard such a consideration, that they seemed to take pleasure in displaying their own characters upon their own theatre.

After the analysis we have just given of the different characters of Goldoni's comedy, it will easily be perceived how small is the share of fine feelings which they display. Indeed, the drama of this author is any thing but sentimental. His heroes and heroines are not those of romance; he gives them their full share of human foibles, and delights to make us laugh at their expense; displaying the egotism lurking in their generosity, the interested nature of their friendship, the envy mingled with their admiration, and throughout all, the dull, calculating, and vulgar part of human nature. This he accomplished with considerable address and wit, and with no slight knowledge of dramatic effect. He strongly excites our laughter, at the same time that we applaud the natural turn of the dialogue and of the characters. But we are not very sure that this is the sole object of comedy; and the feeling of weariness which we so soon experience in the perusal of Goldoni's plays, leads us to suspect that in all the productions of art, something of a more ideal character is required. The various actions of mankind, the objects which they have in view, their thoughts and their opinions, may all be considered in an opposite light, and tried by two very different rules. In the ideal world, we propose to ourselves only that which is most perfect and beautiful in its kind; in the real

world, we consider what is most likely to turn out to our own advantage. Of these characters, the former class may be considered as poetical, and the latter as prosaic. The struggle between these antagonist qualities furnishes subjects equally good for the tragic, and for the comic muse; and it rests with the author to take part with the one or the other, as he feels most inclined to call forth our sympathy for those poetical beings withering in the frown of the world, or to amuse us with laughing at their ignorance of human affairs, and at their inability to make themselves understood by mere worldly men. But where no character of this elevated description appears in a comedy, we soon become weary of the narrow views and despicable opinions peculiar to the prosaic class. We begin to feel the want of a species of interest which we do not find; and to this aspiration after nobler sentiments, and more grateful feelings, may be attributed the revival of sentimental comedy, of domestic tragedy, of tragi-comedy, the melodrame, and romantic comedy, in different ways, upon the stage of every people.

But though Goldoni occasionally aimed at creating a sort of interest, it was rather in imitation of the intricacy of the Spanish *imbrogli*, and of the romantic comedy, where the incidents crowd upon each other, and the heroine only escapes out of one danger to rush into another,

than upon the model of the French sentimental dramas, employed by his rival Chiari, that he sought to attract and to move the feelings of his audience. The best specimen which we possess of this kind, is in his *Incognita*. Rosaura is the daughter of a Sardian gentleman, who had been ruined in a family quarrel, which had already caused the effusion of much blood. His other children had all been assassinated, and he is himself in continual danger from the weapons of hired bravos sent in pursuit of him by his enemy. Both had been banished by the laws of their country; and the father of Rosaura had sought refuge, under a feigned name, in Naples; where he disguises himself even from his daughter, to whom he only appears as a friend of her family. Fresh dangers once more compel him to seek for safety in flight; he conceals his daughter in the cottage of a peasant in Aversa; and there the scene first opens upon us. A gentleman of the name of Florindo, *cavaliere servente* to Beatrice, wife of the intendant, falls in love with Rosaura at Aversa. She requites his passion, and is on the point of eloping with him, to avoid the importunities of Lelio, another admirer, who is the leader of those bravos and smugglers formerly so numerous in the kingdom of Naples. He disperses the force sent in pursuit of him; sets justice at defiance, and spreads terror through the neighbouring country. By the outrages and

depredations of Lelio, the vindictive jealousy of Beatrice, the importunate warmth of Florindo, and the intendant's love of justice, Rosaura is involved in a series of adventures, carried away an infinite number of times and as often released, in such a way as to keep up a very lively degree of interest and curiosity. The character of Pantaloon, Lelio's father, and a respectable merchant of Venice, who alone retains any influence over his son, is of itself sufficient to support the interest of the piece. His conduct, under the most trying circumstances, is represented as equally delicate, generous, and determined. We may, likewise, consider Goldoni as entitled to praise for having placed the scene of his comedies in the manners of a country, in every way so suitable for the representation of romantic adventures. It is there that we behold men enslaved by habits of effeminacy and sloth; or breaking through the restraints of society, to surrender themselves madly to their passions; living in open defiance of public order, and yielding no obedience to the despicable governments, whose yoke they have shaken off. We have there, likewise, seen, no later than the close of the sixteenth century, a sovereign prince, Alfonso Piccolomini, duke of Monte Mariano, become the chief of a horde of banditti, and continue his strange profession for more than a period of ten years. It was a circumstance of more common

occurrence for the Neapolitan gentlemen to grant the use of their castles and estates, as a safe retreat for the banditti employed by them in their private quarrels; insomuch that the existence of these men, living in open defiance of the laws, and dreaded even by cities, which had suffered from their violence, was sufficiently real to admit of the introduction of scenes, similar to those of the *Incognita*, into the romantic comedy and the romances of Italy.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Italian Comedy continued: Gozzi; Albergati; Avelloni; Federici; Rossi; Pindemonti, &c.

GOLDONI is universally allowed, by the people of Italy, to be the great master of the comic stage; and his productions, identified as they are with the character and manners of the nation for which they were written, are always received with enthusiastic applause. I have frequently heard the representation of one of his pieces interrupted by the repeated cry of "*Gran Goldoni,*" which was caught and re-echoed through all parts of the theatre. Yet his merit, however eminent in the natural and faithful delineation of manners, and in the strain of gaiety that runs throughout, by no means conveys an idea of grandeur, or of transcendant genius. As we have before had occasion to observe, Goldoni was extremely provoked to behold his pieces made a subject of parody by Count Gozzi, and more so that his attempts had been received by the public with very general applause, though bestowed less, perhaps, on the happiness of the parody than on the fantastic productions in which it was contained. This gave rise to a li-

terary quarrel, attended by two very remarkable circumstances. Goldoni became irritated to such a degree as to lead him to abandon his country and his native tongue. Retiring to Paris, he devoted his talents to the French theatre, producing pieces written in that language. With Gozzi it had likewise the effect of leading to a new style of comedy, by the introduction of those fairy dramas, which had such an astonishing run, during several years, at Venice, and which are now completely forgotten, except indeed by the Germans, who, on their revival, conferred upon Count Gozzi the title of the first comic writer of Italy.

The dramatists of the eighteenth century, who adopted the French drama as their model, invariably produced complete pieces for the stage. The company of which Goldoni had the management, undertook to give a faithful representation of the author's pieces; each performer engaging to observe his instructions, without interrupting the dialogue, for the sake of displaying his own extempore talents. This was a sudden and a serious check to the *comedy of art*, which, however loose and improbable, and often vulgar and indecent in its character, had discovered, in its original spirit, great energy and vivacity; those sterling qualities of the Italian drama, of which Goldoni availed himself, to give a lasting reputation to his name. It appears that one of the

most distinguished companies of players, entitled *La Compagnia Sacchi*, each of which had supported, with surprising success, the character of the mask assigned to him, found itself, in consequence of the desertion of its poets, reduced to the last stage of wretchedness. These celebrated Pantaloons, Harlequins, and Columbines, in vain sought opportunities for a fresh display of their talents; and they now struggled against the influence of Goldoni's company, which, although possessed, as it appeared, of much less sterling wit and originality, was yet too powerful to be met by open competition. Their indignation rose high against Goldoni, as well as against the Abbate Chiari, who, by aid of his pompous *versi Martelliani*, not only maintained his ground, but disputed the stage with his opponent, the Venetian advocate. Count Carlo Gozzi had declared himself in favour of the old national comedy, whose popular wit and spirit, he observed with concern, were fast disappearing. His fine musical taste had been long wearied with the recitation of the *versi Martelliani*, then admitted, for more than twenty years, upon the stage, in contempt of all Italian prosody; nor was his delicacy less wounded by the very inflated and perplexed style adopted by the Abbate Chiari, in imitation of Marini and the *seicentisti*. His national feelings were equally opposed to the authority assumed, in matters of taste, by the French writers. He,

moreover, disliked their philosophy, and eagerly availed himself of an occasion to turn it into ridicule. In 1761, he presented the company of players, entitled *Sacchi*, with his dramatic sketch of the *Three Oranges*, leaving the subordinate parts to be filled up by the humour and imagination so abundantly displayed by these admirable actors; who, further inspired by the personal dislike which they felt towards the objects of their parody, played it with the greatest success.

The scene of the *Three Oranges* is laid in the kingdom, and at the court of the King of Diamonds, who appears in all his mock majesty and gravity, very exactly copied from his prototype in cards. Tartaglia, the hereditary prince of Diamonds, is in the last stage of melancholy, owing to the dark enchantments of a wicked fairy (the Abbate Chiari), who is destroying the prince by a slow poison of the *versi Martelliani*, drop by drop. The same fairy is in league with the ambitious knave of Diamonds, and with Clarice, the lady of his affections, representing, I believe, the queen of Spades, who flatter themselves with the hope of succeeding to the crown. Tartaglia has not the least chance of recovery, unless he can be made to laugh; and another enchanter (Goldoni) has dispatched Truffaldino, a black mask, to the court, who employs his art in tempting the prince to smile. So far, the piece was a direct and almost undisguised satire upon

Goldoni and Chiari. Their appearance on the stage was accompanied by a parody of their language, and the turn of their ideas; and the conceited and pompous manner of Chiari, and the technical phrases of Goldoni, were equally the object of ridicule. The remaining characters were all burlesques of the dramas of these two authors, and the malice of the actors took a secret pleasure in supplying the satire, of which the malice of the spectators was always ready to make the application.

But the author, having founded the idea of his parody upon an enchantment, naturally enough connected the action with that fairy world, so universally known. He selected a fairy tale of very general repute in Venice, most probably to be met with in the *Cabinet des Fées*, entitled *The Loves of the Three Oranges*. Tartaglia, recovering from his melancholy by a sudden fit of laughter, is seized with a desire of undertaking the conquest of the *Three Oranges*, preserved in the castle of the fairy Creonta, whose history he had heard during his illness. His expedition for their discovery and conquest, with all the wonderful events which follow, were intended, by their author, as a series of satirical reflections upon different works of Goldoni and Chiari. While assisting at their representation, Count Gozzi was surprised to observe the pleasing effect of the supernatural portion of the spectacle upon the audience, which he had been so far from con-

templating, that he had inserted it only by way of interlude; with little variation from the fairy tale in the manner that it is related by good housewives and beldams, to beguile their nursery hours. The fairy Creonta summons her dog: "Go, bite the thief who stole my oranges!" and the dog replies, "Why should I bite him? he gave me something to eat, while you have kept me here, months and years, dying of hunger." The fairy then turns to the well: "Rope, bind the thief who stole my oranges!" The cord rising up, thus replies: "Why should I bind him who hung me in the sun to dry, while you have left me for months and years to moulder in a corner?" The fairy then commands the iron gate of the castle: "Crush the thief who stole my oranges!" but the gate replies, "Why should I crush him who oiled me, while you have left me here so long to rust?" Yet, during the whole of this dialogue, the audience was rapt in pleasure and attention, listening to a marvellous tale, known to every one before, and following it with loud applause. But the admiration was at its height when Truffaldino came forward with fresh prodigies; and on cutting two of the oranges, there stepped forth two beautiful young ladies, who very soon died of thirst. On Tartaglia proceeding to cut the third orange, by the side of a fountain, a third princess made her appearance, to whom he lost no time in giving something to drink, as it

appears she was destined, after many more adventures, to become his wife. She is transformed into a dove before the eyes of the spectators, and it is some time before she can again recover her natural figure.

It was thus accidentally, that Count Gozzi acquired a knowledge of the use which might be made of the love of the marvellous, and of the admiration of the people for deceptions and metamorphoses accomplished on a great scale, upon the stage; in a word, of the emotions which attend the revival of the early fictions familiar to our childhood. While the *Sacchi* company was thus replenishing its funds by repeated representations of *The Three Oranges*, Gozzi more seriously devoted himself to the new species of drama which he had just discovered. He selected for the stage all the fairy tales that appeared to him best calculated to produce a brilliant effect. He dramatized them, and gave them to the public, accompanied with such magnificence of decoration and surprising machinery, as did not fail to draw forth testimonies of its liveliest applause. The humour of the actors, and the animation and interest which the author contrived to throw into these time-worn fictions, gave them all the effect of a tragi-comedy equally interesting and amusing.

In many of these fantastic creations, Gozzi at once displayed the qualities of a poet and a man.

of wit. Of this, perhaps, the pieces entitled *The Lady Serpent, Zobeide, The Blue Monster, The Green Bird, The King of the Genii,* &c. might afford sufficient proofs. He avoided personal satire, in order better to sustain the serious portion of his subject. He seemed to have imbibed the very spirit of fairy fables; and if his tragi-comedy display too little resemblance to nature, it, at least, preserves the sort of probability we look for in a fairy tale. He no longer bounded his ambition to a mere outline, as he had before done in *The Three Oranges;* but divided his performances into the acts and scenes of a regular tragedy, and composed the parts relating to the serious characters in iambic verse. To the extempore talents of the actors, the author confided only the five characters, in mask, of Pantaloon, Columbine, the Neapolitan Tartaglia, Truffaldino, (the Harlequin of others,) and Smeraldina, his sister, or the sister of Columbine. The scene was laid in unknown regions of the East, where the marvellous required to be limited only by the author's own imagination, and where he supposes five Italian adventurers, the masks, had just arrived to try their fortune; referring the event to modern times, in order that he might lose none of the sources of amusement to be derived from allusions to the manners of his contemporaries and fellow-countrymen. He had, likewise, sketched and prepared the particular

scenes which he proposed to leave to the discretion of his *improvvisatori*, in such a manner as hardly to permit them to mistake the part assigned them, either in their style of language, in their peculiar sort of pleasantry, or in the general design of the whole. The more serious personages were invariably placed in very critical circumstances, for the purpose of creating sufficient interest and curiosity, sometimes in the adventures, and sometimes in the characters themselves. Their language was occasionally touching, inspired by kind and impassioned feelings, and expressed with a poetic warmth, which seemed to spring from the heart. Most frequently, however, the interest was kept alive by one astonishing incident crowded upon another, for the gratification of surprise and curiosity. We might almost be led to suppose, that the human faculties, beyond a certain degree of power, are destructive of each other, and that an excessive developement of the imagination is inconsistent with sensibility of mind. There is, for instance, no situation of a more affecting nature than in the *Zobeide* of Gozzi, yet its perusal, in all probability, never cost a single tear. The princess is carried off by a wicked enchanter, who, imposing upon her by his hypocrisy, has inspired her with a passion for him. This monster, whose name is *Sinadab*, never retains the same wife longer than forty days; after which time he transforms her into a heifer, and carries off another

by the power of his magical art. Those who have resisted him are tormented, in a dismal cavern, with all the punishments he can inflict. Zobeide has already arrived at the fortieth day, and the monster is resolved to destroy her.* But she has fortunately made an impression on the heart of Abdalac, the high priest of the country, no less powerful a magician than the king himself, and he endeavours to make the infernal incantations of the latter recoil upon his own head. He reveals to Zobeide the character of her husband, and the fate which is in reserve for her. He shews her, among the wretched prisoners in the cavern, who have resisted King Sinadab, her own sister and her half-sister; and the scene represented on the stage strongly resembles the character of Dante's Hell. One of these wretches is seen pacing the winding cavern, with her head in her hand, suspended by the hair; the bosom of another is made the prey of serpents perpetually gnawing at her heart; a third is seen half metamorphosed into a monster; and all exclaim with horror against the cruelty and excesses of Sinadab. No longer under de-

* [It would appear that the English are little less indebted than the Germans to the fantastic drama of Gozzi, many of whose marvellous productions may be traced in the most popular after-pieces of the day, exhibited with all the supernatural embellishment and effect which the *King of the Genii*, and the great *Blue Beard* himself, so well know how to produce. *Tr.*]

lusion, Zobeide tears the image of the monster from her heart; but in order to escape his fury, she is obliged to conceal from him the discovery she has made. She has soon further reasons to detest him. Her father and her brother arrive, with an army, to her rescue; when Sinadab, by a new enchantment, so far changes their appearance, that, ignorant of each other, they engage in single combat, and the father is killed by his own son. Zobeide still disguises her feelings, and is invited by Sinadab to partake of a collation, where he proposes to give her the fatal cake which was to transform her into a heifer. But she adroitly takes care to substitute one of the cakes for another, and Sinadab himself is now transformed into a monster, a circumstance of which Abdalac avails himself, to break the whole of his enchantments, and to restore his captives to liberty. Few tragedies exhibit more terrific incidents than we meet with in *Zobeide:* where she discovers her own sisters among the victims of a husband she so much loved, and where Schemseddin, her brother, kills his father in mistake. But so many marvellous events seem to leave no room for emotions of pity, either in the author or the spectator; the former being too much busied in conducting new intrigues, to think of bestowing more than a few exclamations upon the most distressing occurrence, and in the tumult and crowd of incidents, losing sight of the effects which they ought to be made to produce upon the feelings of

the audience. Although the versification can by no means be pronounced faultless, in regard to metrical rules, yet its chief failure is the want of elevation of style and expression; and whilst the incidents tend to excite the attention, they in no way produce a lasting impression on the mind.

The comic masks had full as great a share in supporting the credit of these fantastic exhibitions, as the supernatural machinery itself. They were entitled, by their author, *Fiabe*, or *Fables*, from an old Italian word, nearly obsolete. The masks of Gozzi, however, have no sort of resemblance to those of the comedy of art. The ancient masks were chosen with a view to a general representation of the circumstances of real social life. Thus Pantaloon, the merchant; the doctor of law, Balanzoni; Captain Spavento, the Spanish bully; the busybody, Columbine; the stupid valet, Harlequin, and so many others, were all taken from different conditions of society, in such a way as to give a sort of family picture, approaching as nearly to the original as possible. Their country, their situation in life, and their family, were all, like their characters, arranged so as to display an accurate representation of domestic affairs. But when once transported into enchanted regions, they no longer preserved their individuality; and the distinction of situation, of language, and of country, between Harlequin, Columbine, and Pantaloon, when they arrive at Teflis, or at Samandal, is

almost too trifling to be observed. They seem to have lost the recollection of their former condition, and have all the appearance of upstart adventurers, very much resembling each other. They are scarcely to be distinguished in Gozzi's productions; which is chiefly to be regretted for the sake of the character of Pantaloon, whose appropriate qualities were an honourable testimony to the loyalty, simplicity, and good feeling of the old merchants of Venice. A tinge of ridicule attached itself to their manners, no less antique than the fashion of their beard and dress; but a noble, generous, and even delicate conduct and deportment shone through this antiquated disguise. The works of Gozzi fell into neglect on the separation of the *Sacchi* company, as no other troop remained which had been accustomed to extemporary acting, with the same ability and success. Indeed, Gozzi himself had contributed not a little to deprive the actors of their former spirit and invention, qualities which he nevertheless exacted of the performers, by altering the parts which had been assigned to them; and when divested of their individual character, they seemed to lose the associations and the inspiration which had facilitated the exercise of their peculiar talents.*

* These extempore comedies continued to be played at Venice till within a very few years. In the theatrical journals, up

It does not appear that Gozzi's plays were ever represented upon other theatres than those of Venice; nor do they, in truth, represent the national spirit of the Italian people. We almost feel inclined, on their perusal, to refer them to a German, rather than to an Italian origin; and, indeed, they have been repeatedly published, and received with the greatest enthusiasm by the German people. Many of his pieces were translated, and acquired for Gozzi a reputation which has ever since made his name popular in Germany. The taste for fairy fictions appears to have spread, however, no farther than Venice: they are neither to be met with in the peasant's hut, nor in the nursery, in other parts of Italy. They appear to have taken refuge among the common people of Venice, with whom every species of fiction was in repute, and where it is made a regular profession to invent and to recite stories for the populace in the streets. As soon as the relater perceives that the interest is at its height, and that the curiosity of the people is excited without

to the year 1801, we frequently find mention of them as represented at the theatres of S. Angelo, S. Luca, and S. Gio. Crisostomo. Under the titles of *Comedies of Art*, we meet with *La Nascita di Truffaldino, I Personnaggi di Truffaldino, I Due Truffaldini, La Favola del Corvo*, &c. The names of the ancient masks are also inserted in these journals: such as, Pantaloon, Tartaglia, Harlequin, Columbine; but neither comedies of art, nor masks, appeared at so recent a period in other parts of Italy.

being gratified, he adroitly presents his hat to each of his audience, and raises a subscription before he proceeds with the catastrophe, which he gives out according to the price. Count Gozzi was one of the last writers of talent who produced his pieces in the sketch, and who aimed at preserving to his countrymen the extempore character of the old comedy. His theatrical reputation continued for ten or fifteen years in Venice; but, while he obtained the applause of the people, all the men of letters, even those who had the least pretensions to the title, attacked him with the utmost critical virulence and animosity. They ridiculed his *Fables;* and without being at the trouble of entering into the merits of the subject, or of examining how far the efforts of a wild imagination may be made subservient to the expression of the feelings and to theatrical success, they endeavoured to expose the absurdity of such transformations and miracles, and the improbability of the fairy tales upon which they were founded. The modern Italians have also peculiar opinions relating to some points of supernatural belief. They entertain a particular dread of being suspected of lending the same faith to fairy tales and apparitions, which they are daily in the habit of displaying on the subject of new miracles, so frequently performed before their eyes. They seem to regard the fictions of the imagination with jealousy, as if they were afraid

of being accused of childish weakness and credulity. The fact would appear to be, that their feelings are too much under the influence of supernatural alarm, to derive any degree of poetical pleasure from the subject. The dislike which they express towards the marvellous, in these creations of the fancy, pretty clearly proves how much their minds must be still imbued with the superstition which they so much dread.

Gozzi, however, yielded to the outcry which had been raised against him; and, by degrees, he relinquished the kind of drama which he had adopted. In the collection entitled, *Teatro moderno applaudito; The approved modern theatre;* consisting of sixty volumes, not a single specimen of his fanciful productions has been admitted, although three of his subsequent dramas form a part of the selection. Two of these, *The Philosophical Princess* and the *Negro with a fair complexion,* are of a mixed kind; consisting of tragedy and comedy; of *Improvvisatori* masks, with the Venetian dialect; and of serious characters, whose dialogue is in verse. Gozzi, in these pieces, had merely substituted romance in the place of the marvellous; and he succeeded in effecting, by human causes, by the aid of heroism and of perfidy, those revolutions which are intended to gratify curiosity and to surprise the spectators. A fresh host of critics attempted to denounce this union of elevated sentiment and buf-

foonery, of heroism and gaiety, and of verse and prose; and very good reasons may certainly be alleged both in favour of, and against a species of innovation which brings Gozzi into comparison with Shakspeare; but these reasons should be drawn from an analysis of the faculties of the human mind, and from the sources of the imaginative arts. It was found easier, however, to appeal to rules: and the classical authority, which has been neither obeyed nor overthrown by the writers of Italy, was found sufficiently powerful for the condemnation of Gozzi. He had then recourse to the Spaniards, amongst whom he found writers who furnished him with models. A third production, which, under the title of *The Metaphysician*, really pourtrays a very amiable sort of personage, both in friendship and in love, is evidently borrowed from the Spanish theatre. Gozzi met with much the same success in this fresh undertaking, as the vivacity of his imagination had procured for him before. His dramas are far from being excellent in their kind; but they always possess a degree of interest, and much animation and wit. They have, moreover, a dignity and elevation of character, and a delicacy and nobleness in the sentiments and manners, very rarely to be met with in the Italian theatre, and which betray, at a glance, their Spanish origin.

We have, elsewhere, had occasion to observe

that the Duke of Parma proposed prizes as the means of producing the best dramatic compositions. At the annual meetings, which took place about the year 1770, and were continued until 1778, several pieces of a superior character appeared, among which those of the Marchese Albergati Capacelli, a Bolognese, were the most distinguished. One of these dramas, entitled *The Prisoner*, merited the laurel crown in the year 1774. The peculiar qualities of Albergati's dramas, which are pretty numerous, are the versatility, ease, and variety, which are every where discoverable, united to much delicacy of wit and good feeling. The play of *The Prisoner* consists of five acts, and is written in verse. The interest turns upon the affection of a man of rank for a lady wanting the advantage of birth, and the sufferings which they experience in consequence of the undue exercise of parental authority. Albergati was nearly the first writer in Italy who selected this incident for dramatic use; and he treated it with equal energy and sensibility. It was not long before he displayed talents, no less conspicuous, in pure comedy. A man of the world, and conversant with the best society which Italy afforded, he employed the opportunities he thus enjoyed, to observe life and to describe it with impartiality and truth. His *Ciarlatore Maldicente, The Malicious Busybody*, is quite worthy of Goldoni, in the singular correctness of its characters, and in

the spirit of the dialogue; while in point of lavish wit, and elegance of style, it may, perhaps, be pronounced to be superior. But we find little that is interesting in this comedy, any more than in those of Goldoni; Albergati, like him, borrowing his descriptions altogether from Italian manners, in which he must have been at a loss to discover any model either of poetical beauty or elevation of character. The spectator's indifference as to the consequences of a passion, of which the object is far from being deserving, leaves him little curiosity to know whether the quarrel of the lovers, originating in the malicious reports of the Busybody, will continue, or whether they will be reconciled at the expense of all their future comfort in life. The only real interest lies in the hope of seeing the author of the calumnies punished. But this motive is not sufficiently powerful to sustain the action of a piece, unless qualities of a more prepossessing nature are discovered in the victims of the treachery.

Many pieces, of the style of composition known under the name of *farce*, are from the pen of the same author; and they are justly ranked among the most amusing productions of which the Italian theatre can boast. In these, Albergati had the art of uniting to national humour, and to the buffoonery of the old comedy, that elegance of manners peculiar to good society. The most successful, perhaps, was one entitled *Dei Convulsioni:*

Convulsions; in which Albergati took occasion to rally those affected disorders of the nerves so fashionably prevalent about the end of the last century, and succeeded in deterring the voluntary victims from making them the pretence for further usurpation of authority over their husbands and their lovers; thus freeing the people of Italy from the new yoke with which they were threatened. Albergati was passionately devoted to the study of the drama, and was one of the founders of the patriotic theatre at Bologna, instituted with the view of introducing a more correct style of declamation among the players, by public specimens of elocution, in which his own histrionic talents were employed in throwing new light on the subject of dramatic composition. He distinguished himself, also, by his critical taste and acquirements, as appears from the remarks which he made upon his own works, and from his correspondence with Count Alfieri; and he undoubtedly deserves to be enumerated among those, who, without possessing any extraordinary degree of genius, contributed most to the perfection of the Italian theatre.

In consequence, however, of the increasing influence of French taste, and of the superficial philosophy so much in repute towards the end of the eighteenth century, the drama of Italy was wholly deprived of its original character. The principles contained in the Encyclopædia had not sprung up

naturally in Italy; they had been transferred thither without being applied or understood, and were by no means agreeable to the feelings and opinions of the people. The disciples of the new philosophy proposed to substitute idle declamation, and the most futile arguments and opinions, in place of the ancient prejudices, which they flattered themselves they had exploded. The plays of Beaumarchais, of Diderot, and of Mercier, imbued with the modish spirit of this philosophy, made great impression upon the Italians; and the writers who appeared about the end of the century, universally endeavoured to imitate them. Francesco Antonio Avelloni, of Venice, surnamed *Il Poetino*, procured for himself a high reputation for comic wit, for which he was chiefly indebted to the parts he borrowed from Beaumarchais. He had, indeed, the same object in view as the latter. He directed the ridicule of the lower orders of the people against their superiors in rank; making philosophers of lacqueys, and exposing the various abuses of the established order of things to the public eye. The character of Cianni, in his *Magic Lantern*, seems to be formed upon the model of *Figaro*; but *Il Poetino* is very far from displaying the wit and spirit which we meet with in Beaumarchais. Himself a comic actor, and as ignorant as the rest of his profession in Italy, he falls into egregious errors, whenever he ventures to lay the scene of action beyond the circle of his own ex-

perience. The character which he bestows upon his English and German personages is pitiable to the last degree; his men of learning are mere ridiculous pedants, and his philosophers are babblers, who never repeat any thing beyond a common-place. His acquaintance with society is equally despicable; he describes what never has been, and what is never likely to be; and his ideas of morality, honour, and honesty, on which all his heroes are modelled, are as much out of nature as his heroes themselves. But enveloped, as he is, in clouds of ignorance, Avelloni is not without talent. The outline of his characters is good, and his dialogue excels in the qualities of nature, of vivacity, and sometimes of wit. His choleric personages are admirably brought out; and he displays considerable skill in the humorous description of the passion of anger in all its varieties. In the pettishness, the raillery, and the capricious manners of women, he is not easily surpassed. His comedy of *Mal Genio e buon Cuore: The bad Disposition and the good Heart*, is very attractive, and contains some good comic incidents; it is *The morose Philanthropist*, or more properly, *The good passionate Man*. The character is, perhaps, a little forced; although in a country where education is so much neglected and society so lightly esteemed, we ought not to be greatly surprised to meet with men whose violence of character is little short of that of the

Cavalier Ardenti. In regard to the instances of generosity with which he has attempted to redeem it, we must bear in mind, that poets and romance writers have always claimed the right of disposing of the purse of their ideal heroes with boundless munificence. A very remarkable, but very general, trait of excellence in the comedies of Avelloni is the correctness of their dramatic perspective; the art of exhibiting each character in such an exact and proportionate point of view, that it may only be seen as far as it is required, and without throwing the other characters into shade. The *Homicide in the cause of Honour*, another of Avelloni's works, is quite in the manner of the sentimental comedy. The plot of the piece is interesting, and many of the characters have the recommendation of novelty; and in particular that of a domestic who is jealous of her mistress, and who watches in order to cross her in her amours; as well as that of the Marchese Amadoro, which has frequently made its re-appearance on the Italian stage. The marquess is a very lively, jovial, clever fellow, who has nothing more at heart than gaiety, good cheer, and the comforts of peace and contentment, yet is not without a strong fellow-feeling for the sufferings of others. He is a warm friend, and does not fear to risk his own safety in the service of others; displaying that degree of activity in doing good which he before seemed to have devoted entirely

to pleasure. Such a character is very far from being naturalized in France; where the love of pleasure, which is, perhaps, never free from a mixture of vanity, corrupts the heart, encourages egotism, and, in its absorbing principle of self-love, rarely discovers any feeling for others. But the Italian species of *bons vivans* have more resemblance to overgrown children than to profligate rakes; and the model thus drawn is doubtless national, since we see so many copies of it extant. We may observe that the sentimental *bons vivans* of the new comedy are all traced upon the same model, in the same manner as the characters of Pantaloon and Columbine are every where the same, in the ancient. They all speak the same language, and are represented with the same accent, and peculiar manners and gestures, by the actor who is always called the *Caratterista*; and we are almost inclined to regret that they do not every where appear under the same name and mask.

The *Homicide in the cause of Honour* would have really been a very interesting production, had the author enjoyed the advantage of a more intimate acquaintance with the world, with the laws of honour, and with the military laws, upon which he modelled his piece. He might very easily have contrived to make the old Lascari, though certainly guilty in a military view, altogether innocent at the bar of conscience. An old gentleman,

reduced to extreme distress through the extravagance of his son; engages himself as a common soldier, and is placed under the command of a sergeant, who had formerly been a servant in his family. This man avails himself of his authority to add to the misfortunes of his former master. He sometimes irritates him by sarcastic observations; at others, by more flagrant insults, and ends by chastising him with his cane. Lascari defends himself with his bayonet, and kills the sergeant on the spot. He is then condemned to death; and the king, on being informed of all the circumstances, thinks him an unworthy object of his mercy; while he himself declares that his crime has covered him with eternal disgrace, and that he wishes to die, in order to escape the excess of his remorse. We cannot but be sensible of the extravagance of all this: the provocation given is too severe; the retaliation is too strongly called for; and the remorse has too little foundation in justice to be natural. The interest fails from the very circumstance of the author having so much overcharged it. The truth is, that, in general, the minor Italian dramatists undertook to give an account of more than they had ever seen, and of more than they knew; of courts which they had never visited, and of foreign countries where they had never travelled. Fortunately for them, however, they were blest with spectators still more ignorant than themselves, who invariably received their counterfeits as original portraits, for the sole reason

that they differed from every thing which they had witnessed of the same kind before.

Of the sentimental pieces, which attracted the greatest public applause in Italy, several were borrowed from the French, English, and German romances. A new *Werter* appeared from the pen of Anton Simone Sografi, a writer of some repute; and a Neapolitan, of the name of Gualzetti, produced a series of three dramas founded on the History of the Count de Comminges, which does not reach its conclusion until the end of the third piece. Few pieces have been more frequently played, or are received with a greater degree of pleasure, than these three dramas, upon the Italian stage. The second, entitled *Adelaide married*, is a particular favourite, though it is far from being free from those peculiar defects of which the sentimental school has been long accused; defects, arising out of a total ignorance of the national manners of other countries, and of the laws of true honour. The Count de Comminges contrives to introduce himself into the house of a lady of whom he is enamoured, and, without seeing her, engages himself as a painter in the service of the Marquis of Benavides, her husband, submitting to the greatest indignities, and falling upon his knees, when he is threatened with chastisement, to beg his master will not, by dismissing him, deprive him of all hope of obtaining his bread. It is this total want of dignity in the dramatic heroes of the Italian stage, which deprives them of the interest we

might otherwise feel in this species of composition. Contempt is too strongly mingled with our pity; and we almost reproach ourselves for sympathizing with characters which we cannot esteem, until we recall to mind the utter improbability of their existence. The illusion in a moment ceases; and we only behold before our eyes a poet, who has proved himself to be a very poor painter of human nature.

Pamela is another story which has furnished the Italian dramatists with new materials for comedy, and Goldoni has drawn from it no fewer than three successive plays. The Abbate Chiari, in the same manner, extracted three more from a romance, of which he was very probably the author, entitled, *Fanni Nubile*, *Fanni à Londra*, *Fanni Maritata*. The Cavaliere Giovanni Greppi likewise produced three connected dramas, between the same personages, and with the scene laid throughout in England. They are called *Teresa e Claudio*, *Teresa Vedova*, and *Teresa e Wilk*. *Tom Jones* and *Clarissa* have also figured upon the Italian boards, as well as an innumerable list, whose pretensions both to English names and to English manners would be quite as applicable to the meridian of China or Japan. The *Count of Belphegor*, originally from the pen of Machiavelli, has furnished a tolerably good comedy; but it was here thought advisable to lay the scene in a country of reprobates, the only place where such

personages could be presumed to live at their ease, free from the importunities of magistrates and priests. Geneva was therefore fixed upon; and it is at Geneva that the devil is supposed to arrive, provided with ample recommendations to the *prince* of the city; that he is likewise supposed to enter into the holy estate of matrimony, and, driven to despair by the bitter temper of his lady, to regret his ancient residence below.

But, perhaps, the most distinguished farce writer of Italy was Camillo Federici, a Piedmontese actor, who, as I have been informed, owed his education to the Jesuits. He afterwards made many long tours with his company, in the course of which he obtained some acquaintance with the German theatre, more particularly with the drama of Kotzebue, many of whose pieces he attempted to naturalize at home. These, while they discover much less talent and knowledge of the world, retain all the peculiar qualities and defects of the German poet. He wrote a considerable number of comedies of the mixed kind, which are entitled by the French *drames*. But he rarely excites our laughter by the sprightliness of his wit, or awakens our sympathy by the pathos he displays. The chief attraction of his comedy consists in the force of the incidents and situations. The dialogue is, for the most part, dull and monotonous, without being natural; his pleasantries are severe; and when he aims at

sentiment he is most frequently pedantic or affected. His plots, however, are, in general, striking and new; and, in the conduct of his little romance, the interest depends more upon curiosity, and upon humorous and unexpected surprises, than upon sentiment. One of the most popular of his productions is, perhaps, *I Falsi galantuomini*; *The pretended Men of Worth*; the subject of which, however, is a little stale. It is that of a sovereign arriving unexpectedly in one of his cities, lately added to his empire, to observe, incognito, the conduct of his subaltern officers, and the perfidy and egotism of all ranks; rewarding each, in conclusion, according to his deserts. Residing in a country divided into a number of sovereign duchies, Federici selected a sovereign duke for his hero. He fixed upon the Duke of Burgundy, whom he represents as residing at Dijon, wholly occupied with the cares of state, and with the promotion of the welfare of his subjects. This hero, of the most pacific disposition possible, is, we are surprised to find, no other than Charles the Bold. Federici appears to have had a very limited acquaintance with the history of other times and nations, for which we could have more readily pardoned him, if he had displayed a more intimate knowledge of the human heart. But his *Falsi galantuomini*, his pretended Men of Worth, are surely the most impudent rogues that were ever brought forward upon the stage. Not having

sufficient skill to present us with a complete exemplification of their principles within the dramatic period allowed to him, the author has made such an inartificial display of them in their discourse as would not fail to render villains in real life very harmless characters indeed. An advocate informs the duke, whom he does not recognize, of the injustice of many of the causes in which he is engaged, and of the means which he proposes to try in order to render them successful, either by false witnesses, or by documents as false. A physician next assures him, that his object is to restore only the more wealthy ranks of society to health; as it is, in fact, a charity to permit the others to die, being the last chance the poor have of escaping from their sufferings, in being quickly despatched into another world. The president, or chief justice of the place, commits himself still more imprudently, by betraying a very atrocious case of conspiracy, by which he had effected the ruin of an unfortunate treasurer, and had reduced him to the point of death, for the purpose of seducing his wife. We may here observe, that besides the capital error of having made all these villains so boastful and imprudent, Federici has also fallen into that of drawing the whole of his characters in *chiaroscuro*. They are all light or all shade: we find only very atrocious crimes, or the most shining virtues. Thus seven monsters of iniquity and four perfect

characters are contrasted; and among the last, is a peasant, whose virtuous qualities are even more marvellous than the vices of the others. Here we behold good faith without a taint of suspicion; generosity beyond bounds, and all the virtues carried to perfection. The sovereign, with the character which is ascribed to that rank by comic authors, is a model of perfect justice, of elevation of mind, and of zeal in the cause of virtue. At the conclusion, he disposes of every thing in a very summary and arbitrary manner; and the fortunes, the liberty, and the lives of all the personages concerned, are regulated according to his good will and pleasure, and to the infinite satisfaction of the audience. It is thus that comic writers have always approved themselves the stanch friends of despotism. The developement of an intrigue always proceeds more pleasantly and rapidly when a dictatorial character appears, to dispose of the liberty and the lives of the rest, without the tedious process of consulting the forms of law; and as the retributive justice of the theatre is always in unison with the wishes of the spectators, their reiterated applause attends every fresh abuse of authority which Mussulmen themselves would be ashamed of admitting into their administration. Yet, in the midst of these glaring faults, we are in justice bound to confess, that the representation of the *Falsi galantuomini* is invariably attended with feelings of pleasure.

There is something singularly happy in the subject, although so often repeated, of royalty in disguise; and in the continued contrast afforded, between the unsuspicious confidence of these wicked subjects, and the gulph of destruction which we see opening at their feet. We seem to lose our own feelings as spectators, in those of the judge, who is a spectator also. Like him we feel aware of the importance of each casual word, thus incautiously pronounced; and the degree of interest which he takes in each instance is precisely the measure of our own.

There is another piece from the pen of Federici, which is likewise frequently played with great success. It is called *I Pregiudizi de' paesi piccoli: The Prejudices of small Towns;* and, in its character, it is not very unlike the preceding one. The idea is borrowed from the travels of the Emperor Joseph, in which he appeared incognito, and from the amusing blunders which the vanity of the people led them to commit in the royal presence! As the author did not venture to name an individual sovereign of modern times, he confers upon his character, in some of the editions, the name of Albert, and in others, of Sigismond. We possess, also, in French, *The Little Town,* of Picard, and, in German, *The Little Town,* of Kotzebue, of which the latter bears the most striking resemblance to that of Federici, first represented at Turin, in the year 1791. The successive perusal of these

three comedies must be extremely curious, by affording us a comparison between the national foibles presented by each of these authors upon the stage, from which the character of the three nations would be seen in a very striking point of view. The productions of Federici, however, have none of the originality indicative of a native growth. As he sought rather for fresh novelties to entertain his company than for reputation and fame, he rejected nothing, and scrupled not to avail himself of the literary property of others; advancing no pretensions to originality, and only desirous of securing sole possession of the pieces which he had thus borrowed from resources not his own. I have read an *Elvira of Vitry*, or *The speaking Hat*, with his name attached to it; but though I have not been able to trace it to its real author, I can scarcely persuade myself that it is his. The dignity of the characters, the refinement of the sentiments, and a certain judgment and propriety, which no mere comedian, unacquainted with the best society, could have displayed, render it altogether too pleasing a production to be attributed to Federici. The story is that of a married lady who, while her conduct is perfectly correct, has indulged a secret attachment for a young officer, in consequence of which she is betrayed into several imprudent steps. The officer is discovered to be her own brother, of whom she had retained no recollection; and the love by which

she is supposed to have been actuated, is nothing more than the sisterly affection originating in confused and tender remembrances of their childhood. But her remorse, her sufferings, and the jealousy of her husband, are all delineated with a degree of delicacy and honourable feeling seldom to be met with on the Italian stage.

Federici may be said to belong to our own age, his death having taken place only a few years ago. He had a son named Carlo, who embraced the same profession, and their works are frequently confounded together. The son, however, had a more extensive acquaintance with the history and manners of other people, and we may discover traces of more elevation and truth of character in his writings. Many Italian dramatists of our own days, dissatisfied with the mixture of sentiment and of pathos which they met with in the drama of Federici, have attempted to replace sentimental comedy by what is termed domestic tragedy. They endeavoured to disguise the want of dignity of character in their personages, by investing them with more daring and perverse natures, and by placing them in more terrific situations; thus flattering themselves that they were imitating the English and Spanish writers, and becoming disciples of Shakspeare and of Calderon, when, in truth, the only approach which they made to the spirit of these mighty masters, was the mistaken sacrifice of their own national taste.

However strict our dramatic laws may appear, it will be found far easier for mediocrity of talents to conform to them, than in any degree to attain the living truth and sublimity of Shakspeare, or the brilliant poetry of Calderon; and those authors set out under no very favourable auspices, who strive to emulate their genius, by first renouncing the laws of consistency and good taste. We have an example, in Giovanni di Gamera, of these self-imagined imitators of Shakspeare, who have never perused, far less appreciated, the excellences of that great poet. The language of Gamera is not mere prose; it is prose at once the most dull, conceited, and unmeaning, that his characters can be made to utter. We behold atrocities accumulated upon atrocities, but they are all of a despicable description; and, contrasted with those of Macbeth and of Richard III., which strike us with terror while they fascinate our gaze by the gigantic grandeur of their savage heroism, they produce only a feeling of disgust bordering upon horror, emanating from characters whose meanness is equalled only by their cruelty. His *Guilty Mother*, which can pretend to no sort of competition with that of Beaumarchais, is, perhaps, the most wretched production ever exhibited upon any stage; and if such a labyrinth of crime for a moment excites an interest or attracts attention, the reader and

the spectator have, equally, reason to blush for the feelings thus indulged.

The popular admiration of these comedies still maintains its ground in Italy, among those classes who are accustomed to feel no sort of interest in the regular drama, and who love to indulge strong emotions, without asking themselves in what manner they are produced. But the most distinguished authors and critics seem now agreed to explode the sentimental style of comedy; many of our own contemporaries devoting their talents, perhaps with less success, but with considerably more merit, than these minor dramatists, to the Italian stage. The most deserving among these, is Gherardo di Rossi, a Roman gentleman, who has presented the public with four volumes of comedies, and many very pleasing pieces in verse. In his comedies, he has succeeded in giving a correct description of the character and manners of his nation, as well as in catching the peculiar faults and foibles of the society in which he lived. We every where trace the hand of a man of taste, and of one possessing a familiar acquaintance with the world. Of superior birth to most of the comic writers, whose productions we have just mentioned, his attainments are likewise of a higher order. In liveliness of imagination, and in elegance of language, he far surpasses his predecessors. But his satire, unfortunately, has

too much severity in it to pass for mere humour, and his characters are either too mean or too vicious to deserve our sympathy. To this we must undoubtedly attribute the little popularity which has attended his productions, although they discover greater powers of imagination, wit, and truth, than those of any other comic writer of Italy.

In the true spirit of comedy, Gherardo di Rossi has aimed rather at sprightliness and wit than at sentiment, but he was happy only in that species of gaiety which depends more upon the incidents than upon the language. In the latter, although possessed of no ordinary powers of mind, he may be said to have completely failed. His comedies, on perusal, appear to very great advantage; the characters have each their individual traits, and they are admirably brought out, both in point of contrast and collision. The incidents are equally unexpected and natural, and the satire is carried in the catastrophe to its very highest pitch. We wonder when we lay them down that we have not been more entertained; but the author is, in truth, not happy in those sudden turns and expressions, which seem to give the signal for universal laughter, and draw the applauses of the audience. The wit of Gherardo di Rossi is, indeed, too much the result of study, to meet with the success which more spontaneous effusions never fail to obtain.

Out of sixteen comedies, pretty equal in point of merit, I shall here select only one; it is entitled *Le Lagrime della Vedova: The Widow's Tears*, and it may, at least, serve to convey an idea of this writer's manner. The countess Aurelia is supposed to have just lost her aged husband, for whom she had entertained no affection while he was alive. Her time had been wholly devoted to romances; and, with her mind full of what she had read, she resolves not to allow so favourable an opportunity for the display of her sensibility to escape. She appears to be absorbed in mourning, grief, and despair; and talks, and is incessantly occupied about raising a monument worthy of her deceased husband, in which she flatters herself with the hope of being shortly herself interred. Fainting fits and convulsions are next resorted to without intermission; and the language in which she expresses herself is an amusing compound of high-wrought phrases and fragments of sentimental romances. Her brother-in-law, at whose house in the country she is residing, is completely the dupe of these high-flown sentiments; but her sister regards them with more suspicion, their very excess leading her to doubt that they are not very sincere. The former of these is a man who piques himself on his scientific acquirements, on his talents in physiognomy, and on the most recent discoveries in natural philosophy and the arts. Despising those whom he has reason to

deem less accomplished than himself, he is nevertheless always open to the impositions of mere pretenders. He is, in particular, made the dupe of a projector of the name of Horace, who has obtained a footing in his house, and who influences him in the conduct of his affairs. This man proposes innumerable speculations, each more ridiculous than the former; till at last he succeeds in stripping him of his fortune, under the pretence of enriching him. The lady, on the other hand, under a calm exterior, is very sarcastic and acute. She is sensible of the foibles of her husband, penetrating into the character of the roguish projector, and into the affected sensibility of her sister, all of whose peculiarities she rallies, while she prepares the spectator for what is next to appear.

During the lifetime of her husband, it seems, the countess Aurelia entertained a *cavaliere servente*, of whom the old gentleman was excessively jealous. He was an officer; and, about the time of the baron's decease, having a gambling quarrel with his colonel, in which the latter was wounded, he had been obliged to seek his safety in flight. He takes refuge in the very place where the scene of the plot is laid, little expecting to meet the object of his attentions. In the disguise of a peasant, accompanied by his servant, he solicits employment from a farmer, until he can find an opportunity of reaching the adjoining frontier. Here his situation becomes very perplexing, the

country being infested with deserters who are closely pursued by the military; and the captain is in hourly danger of being taken. But, while the servant is devising means for his master's safety, the captain's thoughts are wholly taken up with the lady, with whom he has frequent interviews, in the same dark cypress avenue where she is about to erect a monument to the memory of her late husband. Here, affecting the utmost conjugal despair, she informs her lover that he must leave her, never to return, for that the image of her beloved husband impressed upon her heart, destroying every other feeling, leads her to consider it a crime even to listen to him. The captain humours the romantic folly of her feelings; his language is also that of love and despair; and he threatens every moment to surrender himself to the officers who are in pursuit of him. But his own domestics and those of Aurelia provide for his safety; and, in order that he may avoid the general pursuit already begun, they propose that he should avail himself of the passport of her late husband, to which the countess herself consents. But he must assume the appearance of the deceased; and the lady supplies him with her husband's wardrobe. Nor is this enough; in the passport, the deceased is described as setting out on his travels with his wife and servants; and Aurelia, without any diminution of her romantic tenderness and lamentations, gives her hand, and

consents to elope with the captain for the laudable purpose of ensuring his escape. They are both arrested and taken back; and the captain is brought before the major of the regiment, by whom he is informed, that the affair is less serious than it might have been; that the colonel is recovering; and that he will escape with a year's garrison-duty for punishment.

There are sufficient materials in this comedy for three or four, and there are at least as many characters powerfully and distinctly drawn. Such is that of the Marchese Anselmo, the master of the house, of his wife, of the countess, and of the projector. The number of the characters, however, lessens the interest we feel, while it injures the effect derived from dramatic unity and perspective. In works whose object is chiefly the display of character, it is of importance that only one of the figures should stand very prominently forward, and that the others should be thrown into shade, so as merely to give relief to the principal in the eye of the spectator. Rossi strongly exemplifies the necessity of this rule. He abused the talent which he possessed for the discrimination of character, in such a way, that, by dividing the interest and directing the attention successively to each of the characters, he failed in concentrating them in any.

Another Roman gentleman, but of French extraction, Count Giraud, has very recently pur-

sued the same career, in the line of true comedy. His dramatic talents display a curious combination of the qualities peculiar to the two nations to which he may be said to trace his birth; his productions exhibiting as much of the Italian goodnature as of the finesse of the French. His plots are conducted with a spirit and rapidity peculiar to the people of the South, whilst his characters, in the midst of the most ridiculous situations, always preserve a tone of dignity, which French taste can never be altogether content to resign. Giraud is the most recent of all the comic writers, dating his labours only from the nineteenth century, and having already procured for himself a very extensive reputation. His productions have been received with eagerness by the different comic managers; even by such as have failed to render justice to the merits of Rossi. Indeed, they are nearly the only specimens of a truly comic description, which are now brought forward upon the theatres, giving an agreeable relief to the monotonous sentiment of the other dramatists. One of the most pleasing, perhaps, in point of humour of incident and animation of dialogue, is his *L'Aio nell' imbarazzo: The Tutor in a Dilemma.* Although the perusal of this piece may fail to produce the same degree of amusement as we derive from *Le Lagrime della Vedova*, yet its exhibition has far greater charms for the spectator, because its gaiety con-

sists not so much in its wit as in the turn of the words, in the incidents, and in that surprise which electrifies a whole audience. Thus, when the tutor is admitted into the confidence of his pupil, who had contracted a secret marriage a year before, he finds himself compelled, within a few hours, to conceal the lady in his own chamber, to avoid the vengeance of the suspicious and irritated father of the youth. Being afterwards unable to release her from this situation, he is, likewise, under the necessity of going in search of the infant, which he brings concealed under his cloak; and the moment in which the father surprises him, and finds a young child carefully wrapped up in the old tutor's arms, produces, perhaps, one of the happiest results ever witnessed on the comic stage. The sprightliness of the language is, also, well adapted to the humour of the incidents, without diminishing the interest and pathos of the piece. Giraud has the perfect art of catching the feelings of his audience, of which his comedy of *The Prion of Cerreto*, in which humorous incidents are very happily combined with the tenderest feelings and the most alarming events, affords a striking proof. No modern author, devoting his genius to the theatre, has yet appeared, whose efforts, in favour of the Italian comedy of the nineteenth century, promise happier results.

We next approach another of our contempo-

raries whose talents, neither of a strictly comic nor tragic order, have frequently found employment for the theatres of Italy. He is far, however, from sustaining the same degree of reputation in the closet, which he acquired upon the stage. The Marchese Giovanni Pindemonti is a native of Verona, but now residing at Milan. In 1804, he presented the world with four volumes of *Dramatic Compositions*, as he is pleased to denominate them, in order to shelter them from the sterner frowns of criticism, which might have assailed them under the higher title of tragedies; as well as to decline the authority of Aristotle. A few of these, however, have attained to a reputation seldom awarded to the best tragedies. Pindemonti is a complete master of dramatic effect; he seizes the imagination by the splendour of his theatrical imagery; he animates and takes possession of the stage; and he is, in almost every sense, the reverse of his contemporary Alfieri, whose productions will form the subject of the two succeeding chapters. In the same proportion as Alfieri may be said to have exhibited the bones of tragedy, by restoring it to its simplest elements of form and verse, and by keeping one undivided object in view, Pindemonti sought to adorn it by circumstantial and outward pomp; by every thing that can captivate the senses, and by all the variety and number of characters which contribute to render the impression more complete. His more tender

and impassioned feelings are delineated with much energy and truth; while he sought to give expression to that love of civil and religious liberty, of which he had been the friend and the martyr under the old government, by giving it new life upon the stage. In this last point, however, he is somewhat too verbose and declamatory; diverging into tedious and repeated speeches, which are not sufficiently charged with matter, nor very much to the point. The variety of objects which he embraces required more poetical powers to give them a picturesque effect. In this, as well as in the harmony of his numbers, he is deficient; while marks of haste and obscurity, owing as much to an extreme conciseness as to a faulty construction, must be considered among the defects peculiar to this author; which are, however, amply redeemed by the interest infused into his subject, and by the originality of mind which led him to pursue a career before unknown to the Italians.

No single production of Pindemonti seems to have attained greater celebrity than his *Ginevra of Scotland*, borrowed from Ariosto. It exhibits a striking similarity to the *Tancred*, of Voltaire, boasting those attractions of a chivalric character, and all that magic belonging to the good old times, which still assert their powerful influence over our feelings. The revolting character of Polinesso, who introduces himself into the chamber of Ginevra, so as to be seen by Ariodante, whom

he has placed in view, for the purpose of defaming the character of that princess; and the meanness of Dalinda, who receives, in the dress of her mistress, the visit of Polinesso, and thus promotes the stratagem, give rise only to feelings of disgust. The whole plot is altogether too improbable; while Rinaldo's protracted speeches give an air of tameness and frigidity to the conclusion of the piece. A few scattered scenes and incidents, however, are fraught with deep tragic interest and beauty; and we cannot fail to be struck with the character of Ginevra, throughout the whole of the fourth act. Condemned and abandoned to her fate, under the most suspicious appearances, she still asserts a pride and purity of innocence which support her father, and dissipate all his fears. Ariodante arrives, in the same manner as Tancred, in quality of her champion, clad in black armour which completely conceals him from view. The accused lady is then left alone with her true knight, who, though fully convinced of her guilt, cannot resist coming forward in her behalf, consoling himself only with the thoughts of dying for her. This situation is, perhaps, one of the finest ever presented on the stage.

GINEV. Since thou hast resolved
Nobly to risk thy name in my behalf,*

* GINEV. Poiche imprendesti
Con magnanimo cor la mia difesa.

Thou art, I trust, persuaded of the wrong,
False, shameless wrong, done to my virgin fame:
Never did lance grace juster cause than mine,
In champion's hand, and if Heaven do, indeed,
Prosper its righteous judgments in the strength
Of battling heroes, know, thou shalt come forth
A wreathed conqueror!

ARIOD. (Ye Gods! what boldness!) *(Aside)*

GINEV. But 'tis idle here
To give such hopes a tongue. Now, noble sir,
Since ancient custom so doth authorize,
Let me avail me of these moments granted,
Meekly to beg one boon of my protector.

ARIOD. Say on—

GINEV. I know the order of the king, my father,
Doth yield me up a guerdon to the conqueror;
Thine shall I be, so thou wipe off the stain,

Ben cred' io, cavalier, che dell' atroce
Che al mio pudor vien fatto, enorme torto,
Persüaso sarai. Sappi soltanto
Ch' unqua da alcun campion più giusta causa
Non fù protetta, e che s'è ver che il cielo
Il divin suo giudizio manifesti
Di prodi eroi nelle battaglie, certo
Tu sarai vincitor.

ARIOD. (Che audacia!)

GINEV. Or vano
Saria su ciò spender parole, e invece
Permetti, O cavalier, giacchè il costume
Spazio di favellarti a me concede,
Che farti io possa un umile preghera.

ARIOD. Favella pur.

GINEV. So che in vigor del bando
Dal re mio padre pubblicato, io sono,
Signor, conquista tua.' Poichè avrai tolta

The undeserved aspersion of mine honour
I know, alas! thou may'st enforce thy wishes;
But oh! if thou be generous as thou seemest,
By all the warmest prayers by woman utter'd
In sorest need, I do beseech thee pause,
And spare what is thine own. Take wealth, take honours,
All the rich dower, with which my royal father
Hath portion'd me; but leave my wretched self
Freely to weep; for know, I could not love thee.

ARIOD. How!—

GINEV. Nay, be not offended!—

ARIOD. *(aside.)* (Shameless! Yet,
Yet loves she Polinesso.) Listen, lady;
Know you what 'tis to love?—

GINEV. Alas, I do.

ARIOD. Then wherefore doth your guilty lover loiter?
Why leaps not forth his lance in thy defence,
For whom thou erred'st and weep'st?

L' immeritata macchia al nome mio,
Tu mi puoi posseder. Ma, poichè sei
Si generoso, coi più caldi voti
Io ti scongiuro a non voler del tuo
Giusto diritto usar. Tienti gli stati
E le dovizie che assegnommi in dote
Il genitor, e in libertade amara
Non t' incresca lasciar donna infelice
Che non potrebbe, anche volendo, amarti.

ARIOD. Come!

GINEV. Non ti sdegnar.

ARIOD. (Quanto l' indegna
Ama ancor Polinesso!) Amante, O donna,
Tu dunque sei?

GINEV. Lo sono.

ARIOD. E perchè dunque
L'amante tuo, che sarà forse stato

GINEV. Oh God! he cannot!
Lowly he lies in the wide waters buried,
A wretched prey to monsters of the deep;
Yet is there now a lofty spirit beaming
From out those mortal spoils, in the blest heavens,
Where all my love is garner'd. But, perhaps,
The fame of youthful years, the gallant bearing
Of his proud country's shield, of Ariodante,
(O worshipped name, sole care and sole delight),
Are all unknown to you. Now hark! He rush'd
And madly plunged into the waves. They say—
I know not—but they say it was for me.
As Heaven shall judge my soul, I do aver
I was not false—no! even in thought, I was not
False to his love. Oh, you would pity me,
Did you but know the mingled love and grief

Dell' error tuo cagione, in tua difesa
Non s'arma?

GINEV. Ah no, Signor, un cener freddo,
Un inutile spoglia in mezzo all' acque
Sommersa, e forse miserabil pasto
De' pesci in questo istante, un' alma bella
Trapassata agli estinti è il solo oggetto
Del mio tenero amor. Non so se mai
Giunto all' orecchio tuo d'Ariodante,
Nobil garzon, prode guerrier, sostegno
Di questo stato, e mia delizia e cura,
Il nome sia, nome adorato! Ei corse
Volontario a sommergersi nel fiume;
Perchè non so. Per mia cagion si dice,
Ed io non son rea d'un pensier che a lui
Volto non fosse. Oh cavalier pietoso,
Se tu vedessi questo cor! vi stride
Tuttora, e gronderà sangue in eterno

That tear my heart, whose unstanched wounds still bleed
With bitter memories of that one loved name,
Round which my bounden fealty clings till death.
Yet am I grateful for the generous aid
Afforded, for the sake of my fair fame,
Far more than life, worse than a burden now.
Should other means be wanting, yet a life
Of living death will kill, though lingering long.
Then, kind as brave, complete your glorious task;
Relieve my woes; snatch me from infamy!
Oh, fight and conquer! Then, most merciful,
Plunge your victorious sword into my bosom.

ARIOD. *(Aside)* (Eternal Heaven, though certain of her guilt,
What soul-subduing words! They look like truth,
And wherefore should she feign them to a stranger?)

L' immedicabil mia doppia ferita
D' amore e di dolor. La sua memoria
M'è ognor cara ed acerba, e la mia fede
A raggiungerlo andrà fra l'ombre ancora.
La generosa aïta tua m'è grata
Perchè da rea calunnia il mio pudico
Onor difeso sia; non perche salva
Sia la mia vita. Io vita aborro, e certo
Qualora a donna disperata manchi
Altra via di morir, di lunga morte
M' ucciderà l'ambascia. Or se alla tua
Dolce pietà, magnanimo guerriero,
Vuoi porre il colmo, e de' miei negri giorni
L' affanno alleggerir, combatti, vinci,
Salvami dall' infamia, e poi m' uccidi.

ARIOD. (Onnipossente Nume!---Io so che è rea---
Ma quai parole incantatrici!---Oh come

GINEV. (What is he murmuring?) *(Aside.)*
ARIOD. (It is most strange.— *(Aside)*
My heart is wrung with woe.)—Ginevra!
GINEV. Say.
You grant my prayer—one prayer, for all my woes;
Leave me but free!
ARIOD. 'Tis granted—all is granted!
GINEV. I thought no less. You have a noble heart,
And nobly have you done! Thus let me kneel
Low at your feet. *(Kneeling.)*
ARIOD. No, rise, Ginevra! Tell me, *(Raising her.)*
Can you be innocent? Now, to your champion
Unfold your inmost mind!
GINEV. You too! My champion—
Do you too doubt me?
ARIOD. (O ye gods! what rage! *(Aside)*

Par vero quel dolor!---Ma qual cagione
Di tanto simular con uomo ignoto?)
GINEV. (Ei favella tra sè)
ARIOD. (Nulla comprendo---
E il cor mi sento lacerar)---Ginevra---
GINEV. Ebben, Signore, accordi al mio cordoglio
La grazia di lasciar libera questa
Misera destra?
ARIOD. Io tutto accordo.
GINEV. Ah meno
Non m'attendea da un nobil cor: concedi
Che a tuoi piè— *(inginocchiandosi.)*
ARIOD. *(Alzandola)* No; sorgi---Ginevra---dimmi,
Sei tu innocente in vero?---Al tuo campione
Tutto il tuo cor tu dei svelar.
GINEV. Tu dunque,
Tu, mio campion, puoi dubitarne?
ARIOD. (O Dio!

What anguish!) Hark! who gave a cavalier,
At night, the meeting at her chamber windows?
Was it Ginevra?

GINEV. May Heaven's lightnings strike me
To dust, if ever I did quit my couch
A moment, where I laid my virgin limbs.

ARIOD. (I do believe her; for if this be falsehood, *(Aside.)*
There is no truth. Yet have I not had proofs?
Such proofs? Oh, misery!) And do you say
You loved but Ariodante?

GINEV. As alive,
I loved him always, so I love him dead.

ARIOD. Ungrateful! No!

GINEV. What dost thou say?

ARIOD. (Ye gods! *(Aside.)*

Che smania!---che martir!) ma nella scorza
Notte non accogliesti un cavaliero
Tu sul verone?

GINEV. Un fulmine del cielo
M' incenerisca, se le caste piume
Un solo istante abbandonnai.

ARIOD. (Chi mai
Non crederebbe?---Ah, se menzogna è questa,
Qual fia la verità?---S' io ben non fossi
Certo del suo fallir---Che pena!) E solo
Ariodante amasti?

GINEV. E come vivo
Io sempre l' adorai, l' adoro estinto,
Nè mai sarà ch' altri m' accenda.

ARIOD. Ingrata!

GINEV. Che parli tu!

ARIOD. (Cielo! che dissi! ah quasi

I shall betray myself; I cannot bear it;
'Tis death or something worse than death! Enchantress,
Thy spells are on me. I would disbelieve
What I have seen.)

GINEV. What is 't that troubles you?
Why speak you thus?—Why cast such terrible looks
Upon me now, from those stern steel-clad brows?
Indeed, you fright me: wherefore do you groan,
As from your inmost spirit, and stifle sighs
That seem to shake your soul? Speak!

ARIOD. It is nothing.
Nay, what you've asked I granted. Leave me now.

GINEV. How can I leave th' assertor of my honour?

ARIOD. Away, away! you know not what you do:
Your sight is death to me.

GINEV. Alas, what say you?
(What phantom flits before me--things long past?*(Aside)*

La mia smania crudel mi discoperse---
Ahi lasso me!---Resistere non posso---
Morir mi sento---Essa m' incanta---E quasi
Mi faria niegar fede aghi occhi miei)---

GINEV. Cavaliero, che hai? Perche cotanto
Fra te stesso favelli? E quali sguardi
Slanci tu fuor dalla visiera? E d' onde
Quel cupo e sordo gemito, che invano
Nasconder tenti, e quel che sì ti scuote
Forte anelito il petto? Ah parla---

ARIOD. Nulla.
Quanto bramasti, io t' accordai, mi lascia.

GINEV. Ch' io lasci il mio prode campion?---Oh Dio!---

ARIOD. Lasciami, tu non sai quanto funesta
Mi sia la tua presenza.

GINEV. Ahimè!---Che dici!—
(Qual larva lusinghiera!---Ah, se dall' ombre

If dead things come to life—what hope? what joy?
That voice—those looks!) Oh! tell me, noble warrior,
Art thou unhappy, like myself?

ARIOD. I am.

GINEV. I do beseech you, let me now behold
Your features. Oh, for pity!

ARIOD. No, you shall not,
Till death hath waved his pallid ensigns o'er them,
When battle's done.

GINEV. Are these your hopes of conquest?

ARIOD. Nay, I will fight; but victory crowns the just!
How may I conquer?

GINEV. In the righteous cause!

ARIOD. I—no, I cannot.—What say'st thou? she trembles!

GINEV. The innocent tremble not.

ARIOD. I am—

GINEV. Who are you?
Quick! quickly tell me!

Tornassero gli estinti—se leggiera
Aura di speme—Il suon della sua voce—
Que' sguardi—Quelle smanie)—Ah cavaliero;
Infelice tu sei come son io?

ARIOD. Si!

GINEV. Deh, ti scopri alfin, deh, il tuo sembiante
Mostrami per pietà.

ARIOD. No, nol vedrai,
Se non se tinto del pallor di morte,
Dopo la pugna.

GINEV. E cosi vincer speri?

ARIOD. Io con valor combatterò; ma vince
Chi difende ragion.

GINEV. Tu la difendi.

ARIOD. Io—no—non posso—che favelli!—trema.

GINEV. Non trema l'innocenza!

ARIOD. Io sono—

ARIOD. I refuse no longer;
'Ginevra, you will have it. Know— *(A trumpet sounds).*
GINEV. That sound!
ARIOD. I hear—I come! Ginevra, fare you well!
To battle and to death. *(He rushes out.)*
GINEV. For mercy, stay!
Tell me, at least—alas, alas! he's gone.

It was the great object of Pindemonti to bring before the eyes of his countrymen, the proud history of their country, and to infuse fresh spirit into the drama of Italy, by engrafting upon it the loftier character, and more heroic manners, belonging to the middle age. In his *Mastino de la Scala*, he transports us back to the times of Verona's highest power and splendour, in the thirteenth century. Three of his tragedies are founded upon the history of Venice: consisting of *Orso Ipato*, one of the doges, about the tenth century; *Elena e Gerardo*, the subject of which is borrowed from the domestic annals of Venice;

GINEV. Io voglio
Saper chi sei; ti scopri.
ARIOD. Io non resisto.
Ginevra—tu lo vuoi—sappi *(s' ode suonare una tromba)*
GINEV. Qual suono?
ARIOD. Ecco la tromba. Addio, Ginevra. Io vado
A pugnar, a morir. *(Parte veloce.)*
GINEV. Ferma, t' arresta—
Deh, dimmi almeno—Ei vola—

Ginevra di Scozia, Atto iv., *Sc.* 9.

and the *Coloni di Candia*, embracing the conspiracy against the Venetian Republic, which took place during the fifteenth century, and which is developed with singular dramatic skill and power. Indeed, in all these pieces, Pindemonti has shown no little art and judgment, in employing the associative power, which familiar names and well-known objects, endeared to us from childhood, possess over our feelings, when our personal impressions are added to great national recollections, and when we learn to transfer our emotions, excited by existing objects in the natural world, into the world of poetry and romance.

Pindemonti has, likewise, produced a few dramas founded on Greek and Roman subjects. These are, *Agrippina*, *The Bacchanals*, *The Leap of Leucadia*, and *Cincinnatus*, all of which were represented with distinguished success, before they were given to the press. Nearly all these subjects are original, and display considerable inventive powers. But that which was, perhaps, among all his tragedies, the most strikingly new to Italy, is entitled *Adelina e Roberto*, or *The Auto da fé*. The noble assertion of religious toleration, and the hatred manifested towards the relentless ministers of a criminal tribunal, are clothed in words which seem to fall strangely, in the Italian tongue, upon Italian ears. The scene is laid at Brille, in the Low Countries, and under the government of the Duke of Alva. The chief

characters consist of Roberto de Tournay, condemned for two years to the dungeons of the Inquisition; Adelina his wife, and his father-in-law, both arrested as guilty of heresy, for expressing some degree of compassion towards Roberto. The holy Bishop of Brille is likewise introduced, a real protector of his flock, and the advocate of the oppressed, who in his attempt to save them only compromises his own safety; and the members of the dreadful tribunal of the inquisition are also brought upon the stage. The scene continues, nearly throughout, in the dungeons of the Holy Office, where the circumstances of the trial, and the preparations for torture, are drawn with a force of reality which harrows up the soul. Poetry here appears despoiled of her sweeter graces and attractions, to give a more forcible and terrific expression of truth to the appalling features of religious persecution. The unrelenting sternness of the grand inquisitor, and the milder character of the grand vicar, are not, however, drawn with traits of hypocrisy. These personages are actuated by a blind fanaticism, which appears in all its native rage and cruelty. Indeed, the whole performance makes us thrill with horror, beyond even what is admissible in representation. It amounts to a degree of actual suffering; while it threatens to overwhelm us with still more appalling realities, in the preparations for torture exhibited before our eyes. The victims appear under con-

demnation, and their sufferings are about to commence, when the proceedings are interrupted by an occurrence which only permits time to prepare for the *auto-da-fé*. The victims now arrive at the place of execution; the faggots are in readiness; the dreadful malediction is just pronounced upon them, and they are upon the point of being delivered to the flames, when the soldiers of the Prince of Orange suddenly appearing, restore these unfortunate people, already arrayed in their *san benito*, to liberty and to life.

CHAPTER XX.

Alfieri.

ITALIAN comedy had made a sensible progress towards perfection, during the eighteenth century. Voltaire has justly said of Goldoni, that his appearance on the stage might, like the poem of Trissino, be termed, Italy delivered from the Goths. The writers of whom we spoke in the last chapter, occupied the stage with him; and amongst the directors of the theatres, and amongst the comedians, men of genius were occasionally found, who gave to the stage, pieces enriched with the ancient Italian gaiety. Thus, also, in our own time, a new kind of comic pantomime has been invented by the comedian Luigi del Bono. This is the Harlequin of the Florentines, Stentarello. His coat, patched with sackcloth, bears marks of the wrappers and remnants of the shops, with which he has clothed himself; his language is empty and important, like that of the lower orders in Florence; he affects an eloquent mode of speech, and is embarrassed in the long periods he attempts; he is accustomed to parsimony and to

boasting; nor do his gaiety and his folly bear any resemblance to the characters of the Venetian masks, though they are also performed extempore.

Tragedy, in the mean time, had not in any degree advanced. Except the *Merope* of Maffei, the Italians possessed scarcely a tragedy which had maintained itself on the boards.* The new pieces were forgotten in the same year in which they were produced; and the performers, when they were desirous of representing a serious drama, were obliged to give one of the operas of Metastasio without the music. These, indeed, from their

* The prize offered at Parma, in 1772, for the best theatrical compositions, was awarded to five tragedies, and to three comedies. These are the oldest pieces which have remained on the stage, if we may use this expression with regard to Italy, where the celebrity of the theatre adds nothing to that of the authors, and where each manager has his separate collection. We very seldom, indeed, meet with these five tragedies on the stage, where their ephemeral reputation is almost forgotten. The first is the *Zelinda* of the Count Orazio Calini, a romantic love story, the scene of which is laid in Persia, among the successors of Artaxerxes. To this succeeds *Valsei, or the Hero of Scotland*, of Don Antonio Perabò. It is difficult, under this name, to recognize the renowned Wallace, the antagonist of Edward I., and the liberator of his country, at the close of the thirteenth century. The next were *Conrad*, the hero of Montferrat, who repulsed Saladin before the walls of Tyre, and disputed the throne of Jerusalem with Guy of Lusignan; and *Roxana*, the daughter of Bajazet, and slave of Tamerlane; both by Count Ottavio Magnocavallo. I am not acquainted with the fifth; but in these pieces we perceive rather an imitation of the softness of

division into three acts, and their length, did not suit the modern musical composers, and they were scarcely any longer to be found on the stage of the opera. Metastasio was the favourite poet of the nation; the whole audience knew his pieces by heart, and, notwithstanding, always greeted them with undiminished enthusiasm. In a preceding chapter it was no difficult task for us to expose the defects in the plots, the too great similarity of character, and the improbable scenes of these dramas; but it is by no means so easy to give any idea of that inimitable grace, and that voluptuous poetry, which, overpowering us by its inebriating sweetness, its harmony of language, and its richness of imagery, leads our imagination to the most gorgeous and beautiful creations. No author whatever, in any country, is more decidedly the poet of the heart, and of woman. He is accused by the critics of having represented the world neither as it exists, nor as it ought to exist; but the female sex approve and claim it as their own. Statesmen and moralists charge Metastasio with having had a pernicious influence on energy of

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Metastasio, than any real attempt at true tragedy. In the despotic court of Artaxerxes, amongst the brave and savage Scotch, the fanatic Crusaders, and the wild Tartars, we hear only from the Italian poets the dulcet language of the opera; of beaming eyes which decide the destinies of heroes and empires, and of struggles between romantic passion, and duties and ambition merely theatrical.

character and on morals; but, on the other side, women see with pleasure that his heroism has its origin in love; that he gives a pure and noble direction to the most tender of passions, and that he attempts to unite sentiment with the observance of duty. But what may be very appropriate to the sex whose virtues and whose charms are founded on sensibility, cannot be applied to man, on whom nature has imposed principles of greater austerity.

Italy has, however, in our own days, given birth to a man who, beyond any other, was calculated by his virtues, and by his defects, to perceive the errors of Metastasio; to despise his effeminacy; to ridicule his stage effect, his suspended daggers, his love confidants, and all the factitious system which he had introduced on the stage. The Count Vittorio Alfieri, of Asti, has himself acquainted us, in his *Confessions*, with his own fierce and aspiring character, impatient of all restraint, violent, an enemy to repose, and to a mode of life which had enervated his fellow-countrymen. He regarded effeminacy as a public crime, and blamed Metastasio more for having corrupted the Italians, than for not adopting the true rules of tragedy. As soon as the predilections of his youth began to calm, and he had discontinued traversing Europe, more as a courier than as a tourist, his first verses were dictated by indignation. He had an exalted idea of the duties and the dignity of man, an ardent love of liberty

and of all the noble actions to which it has given birth; a singular ignorance which did not allow him to judge correctly of the government of any country, and which led him to confound the dissolution of all the bonds of society with that freedom after which he sighed; and an inveterate hatred of that system of tyranny in the governments around him, which had degraded mankind. This, indeed, might be called a personal hatred, since he shared and felt more acutely than any other individual, that humiliation which for so long a time had debased the Italians.

Metastasio was the poet of love; Alfieri, of freedom. All the pieces of the latter have a political tendency, and owe their eloquence, their warmth, and their rapidity, to the powerful sentiment which possessed the poet, and compelled him to write from the impulse of his soul. Alfieri did not possess the requisite talent for tragedy. His vivid emotions were not derived from his imagination, but solely from his feelings. He did not change places with his hero, to be himself moved by varied impressions; he remains always himself; and from this circumstance he is more deficient than any writer in variety of incident, and often degenerates into monotony. But, before we enquire whether we should allow his productions the title of fine tragedies, we ought, as a celebrated female has observed, when we con-

sider the circumstances of his life, to regard them as actions commanding our admiration.

The creation of a new Italian drama by Alfieri is a phenomenon which strikes us with astonishment. Before his time, the Italians were inferior to all the nations of Europe in the dramatic art. Alfieri has ranged himself by the side of the great French tragedians; and he shares with them the advantages which they possess over all others. He has united the beauties of art, unity, singleness of subject, and probability, the properties of the French drama, to the sublimity of situation and character, and the important events of the Greek theatre, and to the profound thought and sentiment of the English stage. He has rescued tragedy from the saloons of courts, to which the manners of the reign of Louis XIV. had restricted her; he has introduced her to councils, to public places, to the state; and he has given to the most elevated of poetical productions, the most noble, the most important general interest. He has annihilated the conventional forms which substituted a ridiculous affectation for the sublimity of nature; the gallantry derived from the old French romances, which exhibits the heroes of Greece and Rome under a preposterous disguise; the honied sweetness and pastoral languor which, since the time of Guarini, represented all the heroic characters on the Italian stage, with effeminate senti-

ments and manners; the affectation of chivalry and valour, which, on the Spanish stage, attaching life itself to a delicate and scrupulous point of honour, converts the loftiest characters into bravoes, eager to destroy each other. The gallantry of romances, the effeminacy of pastorals, the point of honour of chivalry, appeared to him so many masks imposed upon nature, under which all true feelings and passions were concealed from view. He has torn off these masks, and has exhibited on the stage man in his real greatness, and in his true relations. If in this new conception of tragedy he has sometimes erred, if he has abandoned himself to exaggeration, and to a violence natural to his own character, he has still effected enough to claim our admiration. The writers who have succeeded him, and who have profited from the grandeur of his style, without incurring his peculiar faults, sufficiently prove the progress which the Italian drama made under him, and how highly it stands indebted to his genius.

We shall introduce some of his pieces in a detailed analysis, and shall endeavour to develope the beauties peculiar to them. But before we describe the style of poetry of which he was the author, we shall first proceed to combat the extravagance of his principles, and to shew the true bounds, where all, whom so noble a model might possibly seduce, ought to pause.

Alfieri, notwithstanding his own extraordinary

character, and the entirely novel form which he has given to his tragedies, is wholly Italian in his genius. He has sometimes run into the extreme directly opposed to his predecessors, merely because he had his predecessors alone before his eyes. At the time he commenced writing, he was ignorant of Greek, scarcely acquainted with the ancients, and a stranger to the French stage; but he had been constantly accustomed to see on the stages of Italy and of other countries, during his travels, indifferent or bad pieces, all in the classic style. He did not perceive the possibility of another kind; and this independent genius, believing himself born under the legislation of Aristotle, did not dream of shaking off his sovereignty.

Trissino, in giving birth to the Italian drama by his *Sophonisba*, was the first imitator of the Greeks, although he was incapable of transferring their true feeling and spirit. All the poets of the sixteenth century, composing in the presence rather of the ancients, than of the public, before they were acquainted with the poetics of Aristotle, or had commented on them, had sought for their rules in the ancient tragedies, and knew no other perfection than that of conforming to these models. The pedantic spirit of the age had given an undisputed authority to this system, and no one had sought, by analysis, to ascertain on what principle the law of the unities was founded. They were admitted as articles of faith, and the French them-

selves, who have always observed them with so much fidelity, have never regarded them with the same submission as the Italians.

Alfieri was of all poets the most rigid observer of dramatic unity. I do not speak merely of the unities of time and place, to which he has scrupulously adhered, and which, implicitly observed on the French stage, have been wholly neglected on those of Spain, Germany, and England. It is the unity of action and of interest, which forms the essence of his manner, and which is exclusively peculiar to him, although in all known theatres, as well romantic as classic, a respect for this unity is professed as an essential rule of dramatic art.

Alfieri's aim was to exhibit on the stage a single action, and a single passion; to introduce it in the first verse and to keep it in view to the last; not to permit the diversion of the subject for a moment, and to remove, as idle and injurious to the interest of the piece, every character, every event, and every conversation, which was not essentially connected with the plot, and which did not contribute to advance it. In this manner, expelling from the theatre all confidants and inferior parts, he has reduced almost all his tragedies to the number of four persons essential to the piece; and at the same time suppressing all conversations foreign to the plot, he has rendered his tragedies shorter than those of any other

poet. They seldom, indeed, exceed fourteen hundred lines.

It appears, however, to me, that Alfieri has deceived himself in adopting this predominating idea of poetic unity. The perfection of the unity is found in the combined relation of numerous sensations. Harmony consists in bringing to one centre diverging sounds; it produces a vast and varied creation, animated by a single sentiment. If there be not a contrast of the composite with the simple, there is no difficulty vanquished, no charm for the mind. An union of instruments of different pitch and tone, produces a concert; but in the sound of a single bell, there can be no harmony, however fine the sound may in itself be. Thus, Alfieri, in his tragedies, touches only one string. The art of the poet consists in uniting various events, characters, and passions, in a single action, and he does not exercise this art, when all these characters are suppressed, and the action remains insulated. The simultaneous representation of several actions would not possess harmony, because it would be wanting in unity; and the representation of a single action, deprived of all accessory circumstances, has no more claim to harmony, since it is wanting in variety.

The true object of theatrical representation is to present to the spectator an action which shall seize and absorb the faculties of the soul. But it will not affect the imagination, unless it com-

municates a clear and precise view of the scene; that is to say, of the people among whom it is placed, of the manners, the circumstances, and the interests of the moment; unless it makes us acquainted, in the same way, with the personages and their character; and that not only in the relations of that character with the action represented, but as it forms an entire and consistent whole. Unless the tragic writer can accomplish this, it were better not to summon the spectators to the theatre. His story will produce more effect in the closet than in the representation; for the representation will not increase the illusion, if it offers to the sight nothing more than words have already expressed. But the true poet places before our eyes the Greeks as Greeks, the Germans as Germans; so that during the performance we live in the midst of them, and all which we behold derives a reality from our recollections; and he thus succeeds in combining harmony with unity, not only in all the parts of the piece, but in the ideas which previously subsisted in the minds of the spectators with respect to the nation, or the incident presented to their notice.

We have observed that Metastasio represents every thing under a conventional form, a state of society ever the same, and whose manners and characters are invariable, in whatever dress he clothes his personages, and whatever name he imposes on them. Alfieri completely banished

this effeminate, peculiar, and conventional form, which reminded him of what he most held in abhorrence, the debasement of his country; but he substituted nothing in its place. The scenes of the pieces of Metastasio may be said to be in the theatre; but those of Alfieri have no scene whatever. He accomplished all the five acts without any description; and in those tragedies where the chief passion is the love of country, he has deprived the patriot of his native soil. We may remark, that every nation, perhaps every tragic poet, has a different manner of placing before the eyes of his fellow-citizens events remote in time or place; and, indeed, it is not an easy task to introduce a spectator, often uninformed, to a country and manners to which he is an entire stranger. The French have adopted the easy mode of transferring their tragic heroes to their own capital. If they describe the Greeks, all that is generally known of them is accurately and consistently painted; but for the rest, they represent manners as being the same in Greece as in Paris; and the court of Agamemnon does not, in their view, differ much from the court of Louis XIV. The Germans have proposed to themselves another kind of representation, and the spectator has reason to regret, if he be ignorant of the subject; for he will have the more pleasure the more he is acquainted with the history of the piece. They neglect nothing to make the picture faithful and

complete; they sacrifice the rapidity of the action, rather than allow the imagination to remain uninformed of a single circumstance; they rely on vast information on the part of the spectator; and still unsatisfied, they devote a further quantity of time to his instruction; and this not so much in local details, which lessen the interest, as in philosophical digressions, from which the German poets are unable to abstain. This mode, however, affects the imagination by its truth of description. The illusion is irresistible, since it meets us on every side; and the drama, the manners of which are truly national and unmixed, is a panorama where the eye meets nothing foreign to the subject. Shakspeare had a greater knowledge of man than of facts; and, in consequence, wherever he laid the scene, he created it, by the force of his genius, in an exact relation with human nature, though this relation might be false with regard to the people whose name he borrowed; and the richness of his imagination allowed him incessantly to vary these creations, and to conduct us perpetually into new enchanted countries. Lope de Vega, Calderon, and their countrymen, always place the scene in the ideal and chivalrous manners of the old Spaniards. It is not their real country, but that of their imagination, and that with which, of all others, they are best acquainted. To conclude, Metastasio has created a pastoral

scenery common to all nations, while Alfieri has suppressed all circumstances of time and place.

Although the system adopted by Alfieri tended to deprive his tragedies of the charms of imagination, it cannot be denied that his motives were well judged in banishing confidants from the stage. These parts are always filled by the worst actors of the theatre. The public lends its attention to them for the purpose only of detecting something ludicrous in their parts; and, in consequence of this circumstance, whenever they appear, their intervention only enfeebles the interest of the piece. It is moreover, quite impossible to perform these parts with effect, as the author seldom gives himself the trouble to bestow on them any character, and their situation in the piece does not permit any expression of passion. Their whole conduct, if we gave any attention to them, would excite our ridicule. They listen to accounts of what they have seen, and what they must have heard a thousand times. They always subscribe to the opinion of the person speaking, and follow him as constant as a shadow, unless when they are despatched on an errand, or when they return with an answer; a contrast to their habitual uselessness. Alfieri would have rendered the greatest service to the drama, if, in excluding confidants from the stage, he had introduced in their place secondary personages, who might have taken an

inferior, but direct interest in the action, and would not have been the mere shadow of others; such persons as we find in comedy, where the action is not confined wholly to two lovers, and to a father and mother opposed to their union. There the servants have a character of their own; the friend of the family, strangers, and even idle intruders, have a distinct physiognomy, and act in their own names and persons. There we find beings, such as nature presents us with in every event of life, who forward or retard the action by their individual views, and who, finding themselves in a less impassioned situation, possess a more distinct character; for passion effaces all shades of difference, and the individual exhibits the peculiar features of his character only in a state of rest. Real life no longer exhibits to us either heroes waiting on themselves, or constantly followed by confidants; and the suppression of the middle personages is no more conformable to truth than it is favourable to art. The Germans and the English alone have succeeded in occupying the stage with persons who have a being and an individual existence, without, at the same time, obstructing the action of the piece. The perfection of art consists in admitting these characters, and in making all contribute to the unity of the action.

These are not the only changes which Alfieri has introduced into his dramatic pieces, in opposition to the practice of his predecessors. He

has rejected all the usual scenes and commonplace incidents which Metastasio had introduced on the stage. He thus expresses his opinion of his own tragedies. "Here," he says, "will be found no eaves-droppers to pry into secrets, on the discovery of which the plot is to depend; none of those personages who are unknown to themselves and to others, except those whom antiquity has already presented to us, as Ægisthus in *Merope;* no departed spirits re-appearing; no thunder and lightning; no celestial interference; no useless massacre, nor threats of assassination, as revolting as unnecessary; no borrowed or improbable confessions; no love letters, crosses, funeral piles, locks of hair, or recognized swords; in short, none of those idle stratagems so often heretofore employed." He adds, that he has made it an invariable rule to introduce the action by lively and passionate dialogue, as far as is consistent with the opening of the piece, and between personages who have a direct interest in the plot; and farther, where probability and circumstances have permitted him, he has placed the catastrophe under the eyes of the spectator, and has terminated the action, as he had commenced it, on the stage. On this occasion Alfieri gives himself credit for having greatly diversified his personages, in having given to every tyrant, every conspirator, every queen, and every lover, an appropriate character. I doubt much

whether this merit will be so fully appreciated by his readers as by Alfieri himself. On the contrary, there prevails in the tragedies of Alfieri a great monotony. Not only characters of the same class are mingled together, but even those which belong to different classes bear a resemblance to each other, and they all partake of the mind of the author. He himself was a man of too passionate, too caustic, and too independent a character, easily to adopt the sentiments and thoughts of another. From the beginning to the end of his pieces, we may trace in him the sworn foe of tyrants, the enemy of corruption, and, apparently, the enemy of all established forms of society; and as his style is always constrained and concise, almost to affectation, the expression of the sentiments, and the sentiments themselves, have too frequent and too great resemblance.

In renouncing confidants, Alfieri has often been obliged to explain events, and still more frequently the passions and the views of his characters, by soliloquies. He has, however, always made them concise, animated, and as natural as a soliloquy can be; and, no doubt, more so than the recital of a secret could be to a confidant. Theatrical representation absolutely requires that the spectator should be introduced to the motives of the principal characters; and we therefore lend ourselves, even beyond all illusion, to an improbable, but necessary, fiction. Soliloquies afford us an insight into the

hearts of the personages, in the same manner as the curtain which is drawn discovers to us the apartment which is supposed to be concealed from every eye. Soliloquies, in this point of view, are much less revolting than that side acting, in which the secret reflection is unveiled to the spectator, in opposition, generally, to the performer's own words, without any passion that can excuse this involuntary utterance, and when the person, who thus speaks in a low tone, often hazards his life for the purpose of instructing the spectator. Metastasio, who calculated upon an audience little disposed, or little able to detect the emotions of the mind, never allows any of his personages to utter a falsehood, without contradicting in a low tone what he had declared in an audible voice. All the ephemeral tragic writers of Italy have done the same thing; and, with a ridiculous simplicity, they give to their characters words which amount almost to the confession of their being base flatterers, traitors, and liars, at the same time requesting the spectators not to give credit to their candid avowal. Alfieri, while he, perhaps, too far multiplied soliloquies, has wholly interdicted these side observations. I do not recollect a single instance of them in his tragedies.

"The principal defect," he says again of himself, "which I remark in the conduct of my tragedies is uniformity. Whoever is acquainted with the structure of one is acquainted with

them all. The first act is too short; the protagonist never appears on the stage before the second; there is no incident; too much dialogue; four feeble acts; chasms occasionally in the action, but the author imagines he has filled them up, or concealed them by a certain vivacity of discourse; the fifth act exceedingly short, very rapid, generally consisting of action and stage effect; the dying making very short speeches. This is an abridgment of the constant tenor of all these tragedies." When an author avows a defect in his own works, it is most probable that such defect was designed. Indeed, the uniformity with which Alfieri here reproaches himself, was nothing more than the perfect conformity of all his tragedies to the model which he had prescribed to himself, and which he had always before his eyes. He adds, "The unity of action is observed with the most scrupulous rigour. The unity of place is violated thrice only; in *Philip*, *Agis*, and *The Second Brutus*. In the two first pieces, the scene is changed from a palace to a prison; in the third, from the house of a conspirator to the palace of the senate; but in no case does the change of place take the action from the same city, and from a very limited circle. The unity of time is on no occasion violated, but only sometimes slightly extended, in such a way that probability is never outraged, and the spectator is scarcely sensible of it."

But the most important change which Alfieri effected in the dramatic art of Italy was in its style. All his predecessors, agreeably to the genius of their language, had been harmonious to an excess, and had indulged, to a fault, in the softness of Italian metre. They supported their conversations by brilliant images, and by ornaments almost lyrical. They were prolix even to garrulity; and they interlarded their dialogues with common-place morals, and with philosophical reflections and comparisons. Alfieri, to avoid these errors, fell into the contrary extreme. His four first tragedies in particular, *Philip*, *Polynice*, *Antigone*, and *Virginia*, were remarkable for the excessive harshness of their style. They were the first that were published; for his nineteen theatrical pieces appeared at three different periods. Some obscurity and harshness are also found in the six following plays; although the numerous criticisms which he had drawn on himself had determined him to recast his style, to renounce his inversions, to replace the article which he had often suppressed, and to retrench the pronouns which he had repeated even to affectation. Alfieri, who dreaded beyond every thing a similarity to Metastasio, studied to render his style hard and abrupt; to break the harmony of the verse, whenever there was danger of its degenerating into singing; to run the lines into each other; to suppress all superfluous ornament, all figurative ex-

pression, and all comparison, even the most natural, as laboriously as another would have studied to clothe his verses with poetic charms. In estimating himself, he thus gives an idea of the bounds which he had prescribed to himself, but which he had far exceeded: "I may say, that with regard to style, they appear sufficiently pure, correct, and exempt from feebleness, and that their language is neither too epic, nor at any time lyrical, except when it may be so without ceasing to be tragic. It thence happens that there are no similes, except as very short images; very little narrative, which is never long, and never inserted where it is not necessary; very few maxims, and never spoken by the author; the thoughts never, and the expression seldom inflated; sometimes, though rarely, new words, in all of which we may remark that a love of brevity, rather than of novelty, has created them." Alfieri, in this criticism on his own style, has, in two points, perhaps, treated himself with too much indulgence; when he imagines that he has succeeded in rendering his language strictly tragic, because it is neither epic nor lyric; and when he says that he is free from inflation. Tragedy has, at all times, been regarded as a poem, and not a simple imitation of nature. The materials from which the writer forms his imitations, are given to him by poetry, as marble and bronze are given to the sculptor, and colours to the painter. Neither the one nor

the other would be faithful to the rules of his art, if, for a part, either in the picture or the group, he should substitute the object itself for the thing represented. The materials of the tragic poet are poetic language; he is not even allowed to substitute for this the language of nature herself. In meditation, in rage, in the pathetic, the melody of the style ought never to be abandoned; the gratification of the ear ought always to follow that of the mind; and the figurative portion of language, which adorns it with pictures drawn from universal nature, ought not to be neglected, but employed with proper moderation. Tragedy ought always to depend on poetry for its rhythm, its images, its harmony, and its colours. When an author renounces the language of poetry, he acts as a sculptor who clothes his statue with real, instead of marble vestments. Harmony and the language of imagination have been too entirely rejected by Alfieri. In almost all his tragedies we find more eloquence than poetry.

Alfieri considered himself free from the charge of an inflated style, because he had no pomp of expression, no bombast, no extravagant images; but there may still exist an inflation of style in the sentiments, constrained, harsh, exaggerated, and expressed with a conciseness, sublime, indeed, when it is rarely used, but affected, when it is employed with too lavish a hand. This poet, born in a country to which liberty is a

stranger, and having neither shared nor known her blessings, had formed to himself an exaggerated and false idea of the sentiments and duties of a citizen, to which character he attached a rudeness in discourse, a bitterness of hatred, and an arrogance of opposition, which, we would hope, are far from natural. He formed for himself an ideal world, agreeably to the peculiarities and defects of his own character. He is always sententious; he always attempts to be sublime; and his affected simplicity, laconic brevity, and loudly proclaimed sentiments, cannot be considered as the true language of nature. Thus, at the commencement of the tragedy of *Octavia*, Nero and Seneca appear on the stage:

* SENECA. Lord of the world, what seek'st thou?
NERO. Peace!
SENECA. 'Twere thine, if thou deprivedst not others of it.
NERO. 'Twere wholly Nero's, if by nuptial band
Abhorr'd, he were not with Octavia join'd.†

This opening undoubtedly possesses beauty and eloquence, but not such as are suitable to tragedy; since the natural dialogue, when

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* SENEC. Signor del mondo, a te che manca?
NERONE. Pace.
SENEC. L'avrai se ad altri non la togli.
NERONE. Intera
L'avrai Neron, se di aborrito nodo
Stato non fosse a Ottavia avvinto mai.

[† The extracts from Alfieri are borrowed from Mr. C. Lloyd's characteristic and nervous translation. *Tr.*]

the situation is not one of emotion, should never present ideas or sentiments compressed into so few words, under a form at once so epigrammatic and so affected.

Alfieri may be considered as the founder of a new school in Italy. He there effected a revolution in the theatrical art; and whatever objections may have been raised by the critics against his poetical style, his principles have been, in a manner, adopted by the public. He has effectually exploded the system of confidants. The repeated stage tricks, the daggers suspended over the heads of hostages, and the passions of the opera dare no longer shew themselves in tragedy; and Italy has, at length, adopted, as national, that system of poetry, austere, eloquent, and rapid, but, at the same time, naked, which her only tragic poet has bestowed on her. The French revolution was favourable to the fame of Alfieri. His dramas were printed and represented in countries, where, before that event, they could neither have been performed nor published. Eighteen editions succeeded each other in a short time. Two large theatres were erected, the one at Milan, the other at Bologna, by the lovers of the drama, for the recital of the pieces of Alfieri, with that complete conception and love of the art which he complained could not be found amongst the actors of Italy, and which he believed it to be impossible to obtain from them. These men, whom he considered as incapable of comprehending his works, and to

whom he could never be induced to trust his tragedies, enlisted themselves under his banners, and adopted his own ideas of the drama. It is related that one of them, named Morocchesi, came one day to intreat Alfieri to assist at a representation of *Saul*, which he wished to give at Florence. Alfieri for a long time, and with incivility, refused, declaring that it was impossible that Morocchesi could comprehend him, or do justice to so difficult a part. He yielded, however, at length, and the actor so greatly surpassed his expectation, that Alfieri rose in the midst of the performance, and regardless of drawing on himself the eyes of the audience, encouraged the actor by applauding him with all his force, crying, " Bravo, Morocchesi!" In the course of a very few years afterwards, these tragedies, which Alfieri considered to be so little adapted to common performers, became so popular, that I have myself seen them represented by mechanics, bakers, and tailors, the greater part of whom were unable to read, and who, notwithstanding, had succeeded in committing them entirely to memory. Thus, in this country, where the imagination even of the populace is so ardent, public favour still affords deserved encouragement to genius.

It is now time for us to form a more intimate acquaintance with Alfieri, by making an analysis of some of his most celebrated pieces, as we

have already done in the case of Metastasio. But the prolixity of the latter made it easy to abridge him, and to include in a small number of lines what enabled him to fill a long piece. A similar specimen of Alfieri would be incomplete. He is the most close and concise of poets, and never admits an inefficient line. He was himself of opinion, that if a spectator lost one or two verses, or had his attention distracted for a moment, it was impossible to recover the thread of the plot, and that some one of the beauties which composed the general perfection would be lost.

The first tragedy composed by Alfieri was *Philip II.* It was a subject well suited to his genius, to delineate this tyrant, the darkest monster of modern times, and to describe the secret and disastrous passion of his son Don Carlos. Isabella appears alone on the stage, and, in a passionate soliloquy, reproaches herself with the love, which she conceals in her heart, for Don Carlos, whilst she is the wife of Philip. Carlos enters her apartment; she attempts to fly; and he complains, with bitterness, that, like the common crowd of courtiers, she shuns him since he has lost his father's favour. He implores her compassion, and congratulates himself on having obtained it. In that he finds consolation for his sufferings. Yet, of all his griefs, he says, the most severe is derived from herself.

Ah! thou art ignorant of my father's nature,
And may kind Heaven that ignorance prolong!
The treacherous intrigues of an impious court
To thee are all unknown. An upright heart
Could not believe, much less such guilt imagine.
More cruel than the sycophantic train
Surrounding him, 'tis Philip that abhors me.
He sets the example to the servile crowd;
His wrathful temper chafes at nature's ties:
Yet do I not forget that he 's my father.
If for one day I could forget that tie,
And rouse the slumbers of my smother'd wrongs,
Never, oh never, should he hear me mourn
My ravish'd honours, my offended fame,
His unexampled and unnatural hate.
No, of a wrong more deep I would upbraid him:
He took my all the day he tore thee from me.*

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* Carlo. Ah tu non sai
Qual padre io m' abbia; e voglia il ciel, che sempre
Lo ignori tu! gli avvolgimenti infami
D' empia corte non sai; nè dritto core
Creder li può, non che pensarli. Crudo
Più d' ogni crudo che d' intorno egli abbia,
Filippo è quel che m' odia; egli dà norma
Alla servil sua turba; e d'esser padre
Se pure il sà, si adira: io d' esser figlio
Già non oblio per ciò; ma, se obliarlo
Un dì potessi, ed allentare il freno
Ai repressi lamenti, ei non mi udrebbe
Doler, no mai, nè dei rapiti onori,
Nè della offesa fama, e non del suo
Snaturato, inaudito odio paterno;
D'altro maggior mio danno, io mi dorrei—
Tutto ei mi ha tolto il dì che te mi tolse.

Filippo, Atto I. Sc. 2.

In fact, Isabel had at first been destined for the wife of Carlos. The king had encouraged their passion, but he afterwards required that their sentiments should yield to his own political views. Isabella meanwhile represses the love of Don Carlos; she represents it to him in the light of a crime: but she is powerfully agitated; and when he asks,

"Am I then so guilty?"

she replies,

"Would it were only thou!"

This avowalis understood, and Isabella, unable to retract it, presses Carlos at least to shun her presence, and to fly; or, if flight be not possible, to follow her no more, to avoid further interviews, and, since their error has only had Heaven for a witness, to conceal their passion from the world and from themselves, and to tear the recollection of it from their hearts. She is scarcely gone, when Perez unexpectedly enters, the friend of Carlos, and the only man who, in this despotic court, entertains liberal sentiments. He is surprised at the agitation of Don Carlos, and begs him to acquaint him with his griefs, that he may share them with him. Don Carlos for some time repulses his generous friendship and advises him to follow the example of the courtiers, who all consider it a crime to be faithful to him who is hated by the king. Their conversation is sup-

ported, perhaps, with more monotony than true energy, by bitter invectives against the falsehood of mankind, the corruption of courts, and the debasing effects of tyranny. Don Carlos at length gives his hand to Perez, in testimony of his inviolable friendship, and as an earnest of his promise, to allow him to share his sufferings, though he cannot disclose his secret.

The first scene of the second act, between Philip and his minister, Gomez *, commences in a manner so laconic and sententious, that it might easily degenerate into affectation. When, however, it is in character, as in this sombre court, it possesses an imposing beauty.

PHILIP. What, above all things that this world can give,
Dost thou hold dear?
GOMEZ. Thy favour.†

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*. Ruy Gomez de Sylva was, in fact, one of the three confidants of Philip, and with the Duke of Alva, and the President Spinosa, was the object of the jealousy of the prince, and the instrument of the hatred of the king. Antonio Perez, who, after escaping the tyranny of Philip, wrote the memoirs of this horrible court, is probably the historical personage whom Alfieri has here ennobled in point of character, and made the confidant of Carlos. The poet has, on the whole, conformed himself accurately to the circumstances of this catastrophe, as delivered to us by history. Don Carlos perished at the age of twenty-two, in February 1568.

† FIL. Gomez, qual cosa sovra ogni altra al mondo
In pregio hai tu?
GOM. La grazia tua.

PHILIP. By what means
Dost hope to keep it?
GOMEZ. By the means that gained it:
Obedience and silence.
PHILIP. Thou art called
This day to practise both.

In this manner, Philip instructs Gomez to observe the queen, during a conversation that he designs to have with her. He thus prepares the spectators to observe all her feelings; and he himself manifests suspicions, which he is unwilling to reveal in words. Isabella arrives. Philip consults her respecting his son. He accuses him of the most odious treason, in having maintained a correspondence with the rebels of Batavia; in having supported them in their revolt against their God and their king; and in having, on that very day, given audience to their ambassador. But this is not the suspicion which dwells on his mind. His words, commenced in an equivocal manner, are artfully broken in such a way that Isabella may believe that he has discovered their mutual at-

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FIL. Qual mezzo
Stimi a serbarla?
GOM. Il mezzo, ond' io la ottenni;
Obbedirti et tacermi.
FIL. Oggi tu dunque
Far l' uno e l' altro dei.

tachment. Isabella trembles at every dubious expression, and the spectator with her.

PHI. But tell me, also, ere the fact I state,
And tell without reserve, dost love or hate
Carlos, my son?
ISA. My Lord?
PHI. I understand thee.
If thou didst yield to thy first impulses,
And not obey the stern behests of duty,
Thou wouldst behold him . . . as a step-dame.
ISA. No.
Thou art deceived . . . . The prince . . . .
PHI. Is dear, then, to thee.
Yet hast thou so much of true honour left,
That being Philip's wife, that Philip's son
Thou lov'st with . . . love maternal.
ISA. Thou alone
Art law to all my thoughts: thou lovest him; *

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* FIL. Ma, dimmi inoltre, anziche il fatto io narri,
E dimmi il ver: Carlo, il mio figlio...l'ami?
O l'odi tu?
ISAB. ... Signor...
FIL. Ben già t' intendo.
Se del tuo cor gli affetti, e non le voci
Di tua virtude ascolti, a lui tu senti
D' esser... madrigna.
ISAB. Ah! no; t' inganni— il prence...
FIL. Ti è caro dunque: in te virtude adunque
Cotanta hai tu, che de Filippo sposa,
Tu di Filippo il figlio ami d' amore—
Materno.
ISAB. ... A miei pensier tu sol sei norma:
Tu l'ami ... o il credo almeno ... e in simil guisa
Anch' io ... l'amo.

At least I deem so: and e'en so I love him.

PHI. Since thy well regulated, noble heart,
Beholds not Carlos with a step-dame's thought,
Nor with blind instinct of maternal fondness,
I choose thee for that Carlos as a judge.

ISA. Me?

PHI. Thou hast heard it. Carlos the first object
Was, many, many years, of all my hope;
Till, having turn'd his footsteps from the path
Of virtue, he that lofty hope betray'd.
How many pleas did I, from time to time,
Invent, to excuse my disobedient son?
But now his insane, impious hardihood,
Hath reach'd its greatest height, and I'm compell'd,
Compell'd against my will, to means of violence.
To his past crimes such turpitude he adds,
Such, that compared with this, all others vanish:

FIL. Poich' entro il tuo ben nato
Gran cor, non cape il madrignal talento,
Nè il cieco amor senti di madre, io voglio
Giudice te del mio figliuol.

ISAB. Ch' io?

FIL. M' odi.
Carlo d' ogni mia speme unico oggetto
Molti anni fu; pria che, ritorto il piede
Dal sentier di virtude, ogni alta mia
Speme ei tradisse. Oh! quante volte io poscia
Paterne scuse ai replicati falli
Del mal docile figlio in me cercava!
Ma già il suo ardire temerario insano
Giunse oggi al sommo; e violenti mezzi
Usar pur troppo ora degg' io. Delitto
Cotal si oggiunge ai suoi delitti tanti;

Such, that words fail me to express his baseness.
With outrage so immense he hath assail'd me,
As all comparison to baffle; such,
That, from a son, no father could expect it;
Such, that no longer I account him son.
Ah! thou e'en shudderest ere thou knowest its vastness;
Hear it, and shudder in another fashion.
More than five years, thou knowest, a wretched crew
On swampy soil and shores whelm'd by the ocean,
Have dared my sov'reign mandate to resist,
Rebels no less to God than to their king, &c.

Yet, when the crime of the prince is explicitly declared, she undertakes his defence with noble eloquence and courage. The king appears to be convinced: he sends for Carlos; and, while interrogating him, he alarms him by the same artifices. He speaks to him of the affection of the queen, the maternal affection, that had led her to undertake his defence; he seems even to be aware of their interview in the first act; but, after having alarmed them both, he dismisses them with an

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Tale, appo cui tutt' altro è nulla; tale
Ch' ogni mio dir vien manco. Oltraggio ei fammi
Che par non ha; tal, che da un figlio il padre
Mai non l'attende; tal, che agli occhi miei
Già non più figlio il fa... Ma che? tu stessa
Pria di saperlo fremi?... Odilo, e fremi
Ben altramente poi.—Già più d' un lustro
Dell'océan là sul sepolto lido
Povero stuolo, in paludosa terra
Sai che far fronte al mio poter si attenta, etc.

Atto II. Sc. 2.

apparent return of kindness, and advises them to see each other frequently. This double examination, which makes us shudder, is terminated by a scene, in three verses, between Philip and Gomez,

PHIL. Heard'st thou?
GOM. I heard.
PHIL. Sawest thou?
GOM. I saw!
PHIL. Oh, rage!
Then, then, suspicion—
GOM. Now is certainty.
PHIL. And Philip yet is unrevenged?
GOM. Reflect—
PHIL. I have reflected. Follow thou my footsteps.

Carlos, who well knows his father's character, is alarmed at the sympathy which he has manifested, and, above all, at his kindness, which, with

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FIL. Udisti?
GOM. Udii.
FIL. Vedesti?
GOM. Io vidi.
FIL. Oh rabbia!
Dunque il sospetto?—
GOM. E' omai certezza—
FIL. E inulto
Filippo è ancor!
GOM. Pensa—
FIL. Pensai—Mi seguì.
Atto II. Sc. 5.

him, is always the harbinger of a more terrible hatred. He seeks an interview with the queen. He communicates to her his fears at the commencement of the third act, and he conjures her never to speak of him again to the king. The queen cannot believe him; she retires; and Gomez entering, congratulates Carlos on being again received into favour by the king, professes his devotion to him, and tenders his services; but Carlos turns his back on him, and goes off without deigning to reply. Philip then, in the same saloon, assembles a council. He appears, followed by his guards, by several counsellors of state, who are silent, by Perez, and by Lionardo, who doubtless was intended by the author for the Grand Inquisitor, but to whom he has not given that title. Philip, in a crafty discourse, informs his council that he has assembled them to judge his son. He then accuses Don Carlos of having attempted to assassinate him; and says, that the prince had approached him from behind, his sword raised to strike him, when a cry from one of his courtiers put him to flight. Gomez supports the accusation; he produces intercepted letters of the prince, which he pretends afford proofs of a treasonable correspondence with France, and with the revolted Hollanders; and he concludes by adjudging Don Carlos to death. Lionardo then speaks; and, in a hypocritical and ferocious speech, charges Don Carlos with heresy and impiety, and

requires the king to lend his arm in avenging the cause of offended Heaven. Perez then speaks, and triumphantly exculpates his friend. He easily proves that all the accusations are feigned, and he does not suffer a doubt to remain on the mind of any present; but he addresses the king himself and his counsellors with an outrageous arrogance, which it would have been unbecoming in Philip to allow; and in the character of Perez we plainly recognize Alfieri himself. All these characters are too highly exaggerated; the contrast between the crime or baseness of some, and the hardy independence of others, is too abrupt; and this scene of the council, although the four speeches are written with great eloquence, does not produce the effect which it might have done, if probability had been less violated. Philip dismisses his advisers, and desires them to pass judgment on his son in his absence. When alone, in violent exasperation against Perez, he exclaims,

> And can a soul so form'd
> Spring, where I reign? or where I reign, exist?

Carlos, at the commencement of the fourth act, expects a confidant of the queen, who is frequently mentioned in the course of the play, but who never appears. The king, preceded by his guards, approaches. It is night. Carlos, seeing the soldiers advance, draws his sword to defend himself, but replaces it when he sees the king.

The king accuses him of having raised his arm against him, and there ensues between them a violent altercation, in which Carlos employs the most outrageous and bitter language, such as Alfieri always assigns to the enemies of tyrants, and which the latter must be endowed with more than human patience to support. Philip orders his son to be arrested and conducted to a dark prison. Alfieri informs us, that, in the first sketch of this tragedy, the council was placed in the fourth act. It was there held in consequence of this interview, and the fact of Carlos having drawn his sword served as a pretext for an accusation of parricide. Alfieri has inverted this order, that the accusation of Philip might appear gratuitous, and might excite a greater horror. It appears, however, to me, that he has erred in this. It produces confusion in the progress of the piece, when this second accusation follows the first; and if Alfieri wished that the accusation which Philip made in council should be absolutely gratuitous he ought to have suppressed this imprudent quarrel, which is not natural, which nothing justifies, and which has no result.

While Carlos is led to prison, Isabella enters. She is alarmed; and Philip increases her fears by his equivocal words respecting the prince, which occasion her to be further compromised in the eyes of the king. Her attachment may not, per-

haps, have escaped the observation of the tyrant; she fears she may have said too much, and probably betrayed herself. When she is left alone, Gomez enters, carrying to the king the sentence of the council, who have condemned his son to death. He communicates to the queen the message with which he is charged; he gains her confidence by compassionating the prince; and leads her on to manifest the deep interest which she feels for him. In his turn, he unveils the atrocious character of Philip; he leaves no doubt of the innocence of Carlos; he promises, at last, to the queen, to introduce her into the prison; and, though we are previously aware that Gomez is not likely to sacrifice the interests of Philip in the presence of the queen, except to draw her into a confession, there yet results from the assistance which he promises, a revival of hope in the spectators, which supports the interest of the piece.

The scene of the fifth act is in the prison. Carlos is there alone, awaiting his death with constancy. His only fear is, lest his father should have any suspicion of his love for Isabella, his words and looks having alarmed him. Isabella herself suddenly enters the dungeon; she announces to Don Carlos his approaching fate, if he does not fly; but Gomez, she informs him, has prepared for his escape and it is by his aid that she has obtained admission into this place of darkness.

Carlos then sees the abyss into which she has fallen as well as himself, and addresses Isabella

> Incautious queen!
> Thou art too credulous! what hast thou done?
> Why didst thou trust to such a feign'd compassion?
> Of the impious king, most impious minister,
> If he spoke truth, 'twas with the truth to cheat thee.

He entreats her to fly while there is yet time; to save her honour; and to remove all pretext for the ferocious vengeance of the king. But whilst she is refusing to fly, Philip appears. He expresses a savage joy in having them both completely in his power. He has been acquainted with their passion from its commencement, and has observed the progress of it, unknown to themselves. His jealousy is not of the heart, but of offended pride, and he now avows it. Carlos attempts to justify Isabella, but she rejects all excuse; she asks for death to liberate her from this horrible palace; she provokes Philip by exasperating language; and Alfieri here again places his own feelings, and his own expressions of hatred, in the mouths of his personages. Gomez returns, bearing a cup, and a poniard still reeking with the blood of Perez. Philip offers to the two lovers the choice of the dagger or the bowl. Carlos chooses the dagger, and strikes himself a mortal blow. Isabella congratulates herself on dying, and Philip, to punish her the more, condemns

her to life; but she snatches from the person of the king his own dagger, and kills herself in her turn. This stage trick appears to me to be beneath the dignity of Alfieri. A king is not easily robbed of his poniard, and it was scarcely worth while to calculate the action so nicely, if the catastrophe was to depend on the chance of Isabella finding herself on the right, instead of the left side of the king; and on the poniard of the king, if he carried one, not being fastened in his girdle, or hidden by the folds of his dress.

Such is Alfieri, who paints with terrific truth the profound dissimulation of the Spanish monarch; throws a sombre veil over his councils and his policy; and conducts him to the close of the piece without his revealing to any one his secret thoughts. If we should one day treat of the German theatre, we may then compare the Don Carlos of Schiller with this powerful tragedy. The German poet has succeeded better in his representation of the national manners, of the age, and of the events; but he is far inferior to Alfieri in the delineation of the character of Philip. He has deprived it of all that terror, derived from the dark and impenetrable silence with which the tyrant invests himself. It is a masterstroke in Alfieri, to have assigned a confidant to Philip, to whom he communicates nothing, even at the moment that he calls him to his

councils. The silent concert between Gomez, Lionardo, and the king, in the perpetration of the crime, excites the most profound terror; whilst Schiller has given to Philip an openness of heart, which he evinces even towards the Marquis de Posa, whose character, wholly German, could never have accorded with that of the king.

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